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GIFTED WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON GIFTEDNESS AND SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

The prototypical study of giftedness is the study of youth selected on the basis of the IQ score. Its counterpart, in the study of success, is the study of eminent men, particularly those who have achieved in the domains of science or mathematics. Though research concerning giftedness and success has been more varied than these models, they are reflective of research tendencies toward: the equation of giftedness with IQ; the focus on youth as a potential national resource; the measurement of success in product-oriented competitive terms such as vocational achievement or eminence; and the relative neglect of adult women in the study of success.

To address areas disregarded in the above-mentioned research predilections, the present study was intended to explore more inclusive approaches to giftedness and success. More specifically, it was designed to address the following two concerns: 1) the need for research regarding gifted women selected and studied on the basis of definitions of giftedness which include developmental, creative, and emotional aspects of giftedness; and 2) the need for research concerning gifted women's perspectives on giftedness and success.

The study was informed by a feminist perspective, and included a criterion-based selection of 13 Canadian adult women, ages 19-56, who were identified on the basis of their participation in ultrarunning events of 50-1300 miles in length. Two non-hierarchical interviews, of approximately two hours, were conducted with each woman. The data were analyzed qualitatively, and this iterative process was supported by the use of a reflexive journal, and by peer debriefing. A preliminary

report of all findings was submitted to the participants in the study for member checking.

The results of the present study indicate that gifted women's perspectives are consistent in some ways with the definitions of giftedness and success common in the research literature. Where they denote a difference is in these women's relative disinterest in product-oriented approaches and their emphasis on process-oriented approaches. Their definitions of giftedness focused on: the discovery and application of one's gifts, belief in self, compassion, and transformation. With regard to success, they emphasized: living consciously, inner recognition, and community.

These findings include several issues of relevance to research and practice. With regard to discovery and application, the research participants emphasized the importance of discovering one's gifts and persevering in their application throughout the adult life span. In this way, the findings of the present study underscored the importance of developmental aspects of giftedness, particularly in adults. The gifted women who were studied expressed a strong sense of belief in self. They raised the issue of the consequence of belief systems and questioned the concept of human limitations. The importance they placed on compassion in their definition of giftedness signals a need for further study of emotional aspects of giftedness. Consistent with their perspective, some researchers have suggested that the development of this aspect of giftedness may be essential to the future of humanity. As well, these women's perspectives regarding transformation disclose an aspect of giftedness which, though seldom researched, may be quite prevalent in gifted women's lives. Experiences of transformation appear to be

potentially powerful agents of integration and emotional/spiritual growth, and merit further study.

Concerning success, the women's emphasis on process and their reservations about competition, may herald a departure from the competitive, product-oriented conception which has been the standard by which women have been measured. These gifted women have suggested that achievement and affiliation are complementary and have demonstrated that high synergy models of success are currently available. Their definition of success in terms of living consciously extends the research understanding of perseverance. Further awareness of gifted women's views on the importance of inner recognition may be useful to practitioners concerned with such issues as imposterism and fear of success. Finally, in their discussion of community these women displace the image of gifted women as lonely and isolated. Further research is warranted concerning this aspect of gifted women's lives.

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In addition to their valued support with my research, the people I am about to acknowledge were important resources to me during the personal, social, and political changes that occurred over the course of this research. While I studied, interviewed, analyzed, and wrote, the world changed. The end of the Cold War permitted new hope for our political future while Gulf War brought any future into question. The seemingly impossible transpired as the Berlin Wall came down, a Palestinian homeland was recognized, and South Africa dismantled apartheid. While my excitement about and understanding of giftedness and success grew, our world's gifts, and sometimes it seemed, its chances for success, dwindled. The demolition of rain forests and old growth forests, the ongoing repression and torture of millions of the world's people, the extinction of countless species and the constant threat of nuclear extinction, continued to be a daily reality. In this marvelous and maddening context, the individuals I wish to acknowledge helped me to keep perspective. I am grateful to them for their assistance with this research and for the ways in which they shared my joys, eased my despair, and provided me with inspiration and the reminder of who human beings can be.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PRESENT STUDY

The terms "giftedness" and "success" are widely utilized in both academic and everyday discourse in Canadian culture. The familiarity of these terms does not mean, however, that their meaning has been explored or collectively determined. The meaning of these terms by academic researchers, for example, may be quite different from that of the research participants. This potential discrepancy has lead some feminist researchers to question the impact of current academic interpretations of these terms on the study of girls and women.

In the present study, the meaning of giftedness and success from the perspectives of the research literature, and according to adult gifted women will be explored. This exploration will begin with an introduction to the concepts of giftedness and success and a discussion of the importance of understanding these concepts from the perspectives of adult women. Next, the research questions guiding this study will be posed. This chapter will conclude with a presentation of the organization of the study.

Statement of the Problem

In the first part of this chapter, four aspects of the research problem will be addressed. First, the concept of giftedness, and second, the concept of success will be introduced. Although these are separate concepts, as each of them is developed, a relationship between them becomes apparent, and this relationship will be the third focus of this statement of the problem. Having outlined the issues related to

giftedness and success, and the relationship between them, the fourth aspect to be addressed concerns the importance of studying these concepts from the perspectives of gifted women.

Giftedness

How is it that the demonstration of certain human qualities or behaviors, or degrees of qualities or behaviors is called "giftedness"? According to several authors, the answer to this question lies in the culture which poses it. From Renzulli's (1986) perspective, what is termed giftedness is determined by "the needs and values of the prevailing culture" (p. 53). Khatena (1982) has suggested that the definition of giftedness is both "culture bound" and "highly dependent on societal needs" (p. 35). Graham and Birns (1979) concluded that genius can be considered in terms of intelligence test scores, which are "culturally biased", or eminence which is "bounded by cultural values and barriers" (p.293). Gallagher (1975) has also noted that the concept of "'giftedness' reflects those dimensions that the culture values" (p. 26).

The study of giftedness has thus been directed by the values and biases of society and culture. This has meant that, in accord with cultural values, researchers in this area have focused on some people, behaviors, and qualities while disregarding others. Cultural biases favoring men and youth, advocating the development of gifts to fulfill the need for particular national resources, and supporting the equation of high IQ with giftedness, have been especially influential. A brief discussion of the importance and impact of each of these influences follows.

Consistent with other areas of academic study where men have been considered the prototype of humanity in subject matter, theory, and research (Bredemeier, Desertrain, Fisher, Getty, Slocum, & Stephens, 1991; Burwell, 1984; Dagg & Thompson, 1988; Eichler, 1988; Kane, 1972; Mechikoff & Evans, 1987), research concerning giftedness has neglected issues of gender differences (Fox, 1979; Fox, 1976; Reis & Callahan, 1989; Schwartz, 1980). According to Post-Kammer and Perrone (1983), "differences between talented males and females usually are ignored, because past theories of career development and research have used male samples" (p. 203).

When gender differences are ignored in education, giftedness and psychology, services to women in these fields are likely to suffer. As Kline and Short (1991) have stated: "Women are often at risk emotionally, socially, and perhaps medically in a world where men not only make the rules, but often focus standard-setting developmental, psychological, and medical research upon themselves" (p. 118). Research attention to the study of gifted women has been lacking. The study of giftedness has largely been the study of youth (Goldsmith, 1987; Rogers, 1989). In particular, the personal, educational, and career development of adult gifted women has been neglected (Datan, 1989; Walker & Freeland, 1986).

A second cultural influence on the definition of giftedness, has been the national resources perspective. While "national resources" might have been considered to include all of those behaviors, qualities, and skills necessary for national well-being and development, this has not been the case. The meaning of "national resources" was particularly influenced by the cultural needs and values related to the cold war (Coutant, 1985; Newland; 1976; Whitmore, 1980) and according to Tannenbaum (1981),

supported the cold war sentiment that "the scientist could better serve the nation than the poet" (p. 26). The effect of that sentiment, coupled with the cultural bias in favor of technologically oriented gifts (Noble, 1987; Rose, 1983) has meant that the concept of "national resources" has been narrowly conceived in scientific, technological, and intellectual terms. This conception has supported the equation of giftedness with IQ.

Leta Hollingworth (1914) and Lewis Terman (1926), the founders of its contemporary, western study, identified giftedness with superior intellectual ability, quantified by the IQ score. Their definition remained essentially unchanged through the 1960s (Hildreth, 1966). In 1970, when the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) identified six areas of giftedness, which included visual and performing arts abilities as well as psychomotor abilities, the definition of giftedness entered a period of considerable expansion. Despite this development, the influence of the early equation of giftedness with high IQ continues, and selection procedures are still often based on this definition (Kline & Short, 1991; Ramos-Ford & Gardner, 1991).

In summary, the meaning of giftedness, has been influenced by the values and biases of society. This has meant that it has been defined according to research based on youth and men, according to a limited national resources perspective, and according to an early equation of giftedness with high IQ. However, just as the influence of cultural values and biases have determined what giftedness has meant, these changing values and biases also influence what it will mean. Current social and cultural values, including the impact of feminism, have created the climate for an expanded and gender fair definition and study of giftedness.

Success

In seminars, books, and videos, people learn how to succeed in business, in relationships, in parenting, and in life. People learn how to eat, think, and dress for success. Meetings, performances, programs, and social occasions are evaluated on a scale of success and failure. The concept of success is ubiquitous. But what does it mean? According to what criteria is a person, program, action, or performance characterized as a "success"?

In personal terms, the definition of success may be individual. But when it comes to research, to the elaboration of theories of "success attribution" or "fear of success", what does "success" mean? It has been equated with income or eminence (Burks, Jensen & Terman, 1930; Foster, 1986; Terman, 1926) and with medical school ranking (Horner, 1972), and it has been measured by the performance of specific tasks such as figure-matching or mathematics problems (Bogie & Buckhalt, 1987; Frieze, 1975). However, its meaning has rarely been explored.

One notable exception was Terman, who in 1947 recognized the absence of a fair measure of success in women, and in 1959 clearly expressed that, throughout his study of gifted individuals, he had measured success according to terms which fit the social bias of the times. Terman's (1959) definition is valuable both for its explicitness about his meaning of success according to vocational accomplishment rather than personal happiness, and for its admission of cultural bias. It would appear that, like giftedness, success is defined according to the biases and values of the society.

And like giftedness, success is being redefined to reflect the current cultural values. Hollingworth in 1914, and Terman in 1947, recognized

that success measured in competitive, product-oriented terms was less accessible to women than it was to men. More recently, researchers such as Sassen (1980), Gilligan (1982), Fuehrer & Schilling (1985), and Kohn (1986) have suggested that as well as being relatively unattainable, competitively defined success may be also be unappealing to many women.

Despite this recognition, women continue to be measured according to a competitive standard of success. Based on this standard, women have been found to be lacking and considerable research effort has been devoted to explaining their inadequacy. This research has focused on success attributions (Cramer & Oshima, 1992; Frieze, 1975; Wolleat, 1979), fear of success (Hoffman, 1972, 1975b; Horner, 1972; Weston & Mednick, 1975), and the imposter syndrome (Bell & Young, 1986; Davis & Rimm, 1989; Imes & Clance, 1984; Kerr, 1985).

Other researchers have sought explanations for women's absence from the ranks of the "successful", not in women's individual failings, but rather in the construction of this concept. These researchers have questioned the competitive way success has been defined (Fuehrer & Schilling, 1985; Gilligan, 1982; Kohn, 1986; Sassen, 1980), and have described women's non-competitive alternatives (Bredemeier et al., 1991; Birrell & Richter, 1987; Lichtenstein, 1987). In addition, definitions of success, which are more process-oriented and may be preferable to many women, have been proposed (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1986; Gruber, 1986; Hundley, 1983)

No research has been conducted which measured women's success according to these definitions. However, recent studies have included questions concerning women's definitions of success (Northcutt, 1991), or concerning their definitions of career success (Schuster, 1990b; Walker &

Freeland, 1986). According to these studies, women do define even academic and career success in terms which differ from the competitive, product-oriented terms which have been standard in this field.

In summary, while success has seldom been defined explicitly, implicit definitions have focused on its competitive, product-oriented aspects. Recognizing the limits of this focus, and the gender-bias inherent in it, several authors have proposed process-oriented definitions of success. Further, it has been proposed that defining success in this way would make it more appealing as well as more accessible to women. In light of the apparent interest in new definitions of success, and the theoretical and research-based indications that women might define this concept in ways which differ from the competitive, product-oriented approach which is prominent in the literature, research concerning new definitions of success which are process-oriented and gender fair is needed.

The Relationship Between Giftedness and Success

As noted above in the discussion, the concept of success as product, such as income level, eminence, or the accomplishment of some task, has prevailed in studies of success and success attribution (Albert & Runco, 1986; Bogie & Buckhalt, 1987; Burks, Jensen, & Terman, 1930; Feldhusen, 1986; Foster, 1986; Frieze, 1975; Hoffman, 1975b, Horner, 1972; MacKinnon, 1981; Roe, 1981; Terman & Oden, 1947; Terman & Oden, 1959; Weston & Mednick, 1975). And, as was noted previously, the concept of giftedness as equated with high IQ (Bogie & Buckhalt, 1987; Burks, Jensen, & Terman, 1930; Hildreth, 1966; Hollingworth, 1914; Jackson & Butterfield, 1986; Kline & Short, 1991; Terman & Oden, 1947; Terman &

Oden, 1959; Tomlinson-Keasey & Smith-Winberry, 1983) and considered in terms of its national resource potential (Borland, 1986; Burks, Jensen, & Terman, 1930; Silverman, 1986a; Newland, 1976; Terman & Oden, 1947; Terman & Oden, 1959), has been prevalent in studies of giftedness. In short, gifted individuals have been conceived of as a potential national resource, identifiable by their high IQ, and their success has been measured in terms of productivity.

In general terms, childhood identification based on high IQ test scores has been expected to correlate with adult demonstration of high performance measured by income and eminence. While this formula has often been appropriate for boys and men, it has not been so for girls and women. Structural issues such as employment equity or child care expectations, may certainly be cited to explain the inconsistencies between female and male patterns of giftedness and success. However, these concepts may also need to be reconsidered. If giftedness were defined in developmental, or process-oriented terms, and if success were defined in non-competitive, or process-oriented terms, would gifted girls grow up to be successful women? And would the relationship between giftedness and success remain one of potential and its fruition? In a context of changing cultural values, which increasingly call for gender equity, which recognize the social cost of the loss of human potential, and which have questioned the ultimate viability of continuing to emphasize competition and production, answers to these questions would be valuable.

Why Study Gifted Women's Perspectives?

In the previous discussions of giftedness and success, several issues have been raised which are pertinent to this question. It has been noted that in the past, research on giftedness has focused on men and youth, and that gender differences have been ignored. It has also been noted that research on success has adopted a competitive, product-oriented standard which is sometimes inaccessible to women and which may also be unappealing to them. Further, it was suggested that when male behavior is considered to be normative, and gender differences are ignored, women must either fit the male norm or be considered to be faulty in some way. Research concerning gifted women and success, having adopted definitions of giftedness and success which are based on male norms, has indeed found women to be faulty.

Feminist researchers have suggested that rather than finding women at fault, the systematic judging of them according to male norms should be questioned. According to this perspective, as it has been introduced above, research is needed to explore giftedness and success from women's perspectives. As also discussed, this research should allow for the exploration of non-competitive, process-oriented approaches to giftedness and success.

Research Questions

In the discussion above, three areas of research insufficiency have been identified. First, there is a need for research regarding gifted women who have been identified according to criteria which are neither IQ based, nor

based on a limited national resources perspective. In addition, there is a need for research which is not based on competitive, product-oriented definitions of success. Finally, there is a need for research regarding gifted women's perspectives on giftedness and success.

In response to these needs, the gifted participants in the present study are adult women who have been identified according to non-competitive, non-IQ based criteria. The research design has encouraged their participation in the elucidation of gifted women's perspectives on giftedness and success. Two general research questions which have guided this study are: What is the definition of giftedness? What is the definition of success?

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in six chapters, beginning with this introductory chapter. Chapter two will review literature related to the study of giftedness and success. This chapter is divided into two parts, the first reviewing literature relative to giftedness and the second relative to success. Because, as noted in this chapter, the concept of success is omnipresent, its discussion is somewhat lengthier than that of giftedness.

In Chapter three, the methodology of the present study will be outlined. The description of methodology includes design issues such as participant selection, researcher qualifications, interview procedures, data collection and analysis, and also addresses ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the research methodology according to criteria of value and trustworthiness.

The results of the study are presented in Chapter four. In this chapter, the research participants' perspectives on giftedness will be presented first, followed by their perspectives on success. To ensure that the reader is able to distinguish these perspectives from those of the researcher or the research literature, this chapter will focus solely on the responses of the participants.

In Chapter five, the participants' responses will be considered in relation to the literature which was presented earlier. In this chapter, giftedness and success will be considered together so that the interconnections between these concepts can be addressed. These interconnections are presented according to five central themes.

Chapter six will present the conclusions of the present study. In this chapter, the two general research questions will each be answered according to the five themes drawn from the views expressed by the research participants. Within each theme, implications for education and counseling with gifted women are discussed. As well, comments concerning contributions of this study to theory and research, and reflections on future research needs are presented as each theme is explored. In order to present the conclusions within the context of the limitations of the present study, this chapter will conclude with a discussion of those limitations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the concepts of giftedness and success will be discussed with regard to both their historical and current meanings. These concepts are interrelated, with giftedness often being considered in terms of abilities or aptitudes and success as the fruition of these abilities or aptitudes. However, this distinction is not always clear, as for example when giftedness is measured by its fruition in terms of academic standing or career achievement. Consequently, in an effort to avoid confusion of these two concepts, and consistent with their representation in the literature, they are discussed separately in this chapter. The development of the definitions of giftedness is addressed first, followed by a discussion of the ways that success has been defined in the research literature. Due to the prevalence of the concept of success in the literature on giftedness as well as in gender studies, and because of the varying ways this concept has been utilized, the review of literature on success is somewhat lengthier than the corresponding section on giftedness.

Giftedness: Definitions in the Research Literature

Originally conceived of in terms of intellectual ability, giftedness was measured according to an IQ score. Though this initial equation with intellectual ability has persisted, giftedness has also come to be defined in increasingly broad terms. Both the importance of the initial definition and its evolution will be considered in the following discussion.

This part of the literature review is organized according to three main sections. The first section addresses the prevalence of IQ and other high performance definitions of giftedness. The second section examines the influence of the national resources perspective on the definition of giftedness, and the way that this approach has valued products while disregarding process. In the third section, definitions of giftedness relevant to the present study and the first two research questions guiding this study are presented.

IQ and Other High Performance Definitions of Giftedness

This first section of the review of literature begins with a historical introduction to the meaning of giftedness. Although this concept has changed considerably over the past eight decades, its initial conceptualization continues to be relevant today. In order to illustrate the importance of the initial equation of giftedness with high IQ, this discussion will proceed chronologically. As will be seen, practice has not always kept pace with theory in giftedness research.

In the early part of this century, Leta Hollingworth and Lewis Terman independently began research which continues to influence the study of giftedness today. In 1914, Leta Hollingworth challenged the prevailing view that intellectual ability could be equated with eminence. Her argument against this perspective was based on the assertion that "women bear and rear the children, and that has meant and still means that nearly 100% of their energy is expended in the performance and supervision of domestic tasks, a field where eminence is impossible" (p. 528). Hollingworth stated a clear case for the rejection of eminence as a

measure of intellectual ability and challenged the prevailing view that females were intellectually inferior to males. Her work signaled the beginning of the study of social bias in giftedness research and was a major influence on the contemporary study of giftedness.

Although differing on the question of eminence, both Hollingworth and Lewis Terman (Cox, 1926 --Terman, Ed.) identified giftedness with intellectual ability as measured by an IQ score. Their equation of high IQ scores with giftedness influenced a generation of researchers. During this period, individuals were identified as gifted based on an arbitrary cut-off score of 120, 130, or above, or based on scoring in the 85th, 95th or 98th percentile on an IQ test, usually the Stanford-Binet. This equation was so pervasive that in 1966, Hildreth noted that "virtually all experimental work on the gifted has been based on this simple formulation" (p. 20).

Hildreth's findings marked the end of an era in the study of giftedness. Shortly thereafter, the definition underwent a significant change. In 1970, the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) identified six areas of giftedness: academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts ability, and psychomotor ability (later discontinued). Changes in identification and selection did not necessarily follow from this expanded definition. A decade after the USOE definition was formulated, Renzulli, Reis, and Smith (1981) concluded that "the final decision for admitting most gifted students to most programs still rests with a predetermined cut-off score on an intelligence and/or achievement test" (p. ix). Similarly, following a national survey of over 1,000 members of the gifted education community, Alvino, McDonnel and Richert (1981) found that "most identification of gifted students continues to be of

general intellectual ability as reflected by IQ" (1981, p. 130). In studies which did select students according to the USOE definition, Alvino and colleagues (1981) found that the use of tests/instruments "betrays an indiscriminate conflation of categories of the federal definition of giftedness; in other cases it reflects confusion, if not ignorance, concerning the diversity and distinctness of identifiably different sets of abilities"(p. 131).

An examination of several studies (Bell, 1989; Delisle, 1984; Hollinger, 1983; Hollinger & Fleming, 1984) conducted after the 1981 report by Alvino and colleagues indicates that confusion concerning the application of the USOE definition continued into the 1980s. In none of these studies is it clear what percentage of subjects were identified according to specific areas of giftedness. It appears that although there was a recognition that giftedness was represented by identifiably different abilities, results from all subjects were assumed to be the same. As a consequence, possible differences, for example those that might exist between subjects identified for psychomotor ability and those identified for academic aptitude in terms of self esteem, have been rendered invisible.

According to Gagné (1991), conflation of categories of giftedness continues as "school districts in the United States as well as in Canada continue to identify an undifferentiated group of talented or gifted youngsters" (p. 75). Identification procedures in recent studies indicate that the equation of giftedness with high IQ scores (Cramer & Oshima, 1992; Karnes & D'Ilio, 1989; Stevenson, Chen, & Lee, 1993) and with top percentile academic aptitude test scores (Clinkenbeard, 1989; Colangelo, Kerr, Christensen, & Maxey, 1993; Yong, 1994) continues to influence

current research. Underscoring this continued influence, Kline and Short (1991) have concluded: "To be labeled gifted usually requires a score of above 130 on an IQ test with the range above 130 as high as over 200" (p. 121). And according to Ramos-Ford and Gardner (1991), the testing industry has become a "powerful decision maker in our society" as "a majority of children who participate in specialized programs for the gifted and talented today are still admitted on the basis of IQ" (p. 55). These recent studies indicate that identification and selection procedures continue to emphasize IQ and to obscure possible differences between those who are intellectually gifted and those gifted in other areas.

While the practice of identification has sometimes failed to keep pace, the past decade has seen a theoretical evolution of the notion of giftedness well beyond the boundaries set by the USOE definition. The concept of qualitative differences has been developed by Gardner (1983) in terms of "multiple intelligences" : linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, and two forms of personal intelligence (interpersonal and intrapersonal). Sternberg (1991) has also expanded the understanding of intelligence with a "triarchic" theory which includes "analytic," "synthetic," and "practical" abilities.

In addition, the importance of personality and motivational factors in the expression of giftedness have been explored. Feldhusen (1986) has suggested that "giftedness is a combination of general ability, special talents, self-concept, and motivation that predisposes the gifted individual to learn, to achieve, to strive for excellence" (p. 125). Renzulli (1986) has proposed a "three-ring" definition comprised of "above average general and/or specific abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity" (p. 73). Sternberg and Lubart (1993) have

proposed that six resources contribute to the expression of creative giftedness: "intelligence, knowledge, styles of thinking, personality, motivation, and environment" (p. 7).

The inclusion of "motivation" by Feldhusen and Sternberg and Lubart, and "task commitment" by Renzulli, reflects a concern for those qualities that make the difference between individuals who express their giftedness and those who do not. Recognition of the importance of these qualities is not entirely new. In one of the early studies in the area, Cox (1926 --Terman, Ed.) noted that "youths who achieve eminence are characterized not only by high intellectual traits, but also by persistence of motive and effort, confidence in their abilities, and great strength or force of character" (p 218). In MacKinnon's (1981) three criteria for creativity, the aspect of perseverance was included in terms of "sustaining original insight, elaborating it, developing it to the full" (p. 112). Haensly, Reynolds, and Nash (1986) called this characteristic "stick-to-itiveness", and considered it an aspect of meta-awareness that characterizes gifted individuals.

Recognition of the importance of perseverance in the study of giftedness has not been confined to studies of the intellectually gifted. Contemporary research in the field of sport psychology has also considered the role of this factor among those individuals who might be considered gifted in terms of psychomotor ability. In a study of athletes whom they termed "super-adherers" for their participation in events such as a 15 kilometer running race, Clingman and Hilliard (1987) found perseverance to be important. According to their findings, the "super-adherer is motivated to achieve and has the determination and

perseverance to do the work that is necessary to do so" both in athletic activities and in "everyday life as well" (p. 132).

In summary, the research cited above reflects the changing definition of giftedness. Originally conceived of in terms of intellectual performance, this concept is now defined according to high performance in other areas, and according to personality and motivational factors. However, changing definitions have not necessarily led to changes in identification and research. As cited above, Alvino and colleagues (1981), Renzulli and colleagues (1981), Gagné (1991), Kline and Short (1991), and Ramos-Ford and Gardner (1991) have all noted the discrepancy between the stated "broadened" definition of giftedness and its ongoing identification based on IQ scores.

In spite of expanding definitions, what Renzulli and colleagues (1981) called the "gifted hypocrisy" continues. The definition has evolved to include different abilities and personality traits, but identification procedures continue to maintain the equation of intellectual ability and giftedness. Evaluation of relevant research in the area continues to "reveal major gaps between research and practice in identification of the gifted" (Richert, 1991, p. 81). Specific research attention to those identified as gifted according to other abilities is needed to bridge these gaps.

The Definition of Giftedness as a National Resource

In this section, a second influence on the evolution of the definition of giftedness will be presented. The identification of giftedness by intelligence test scores as discussed above, is consistent with the view

of gifted individuals as intellectual national resources. This perspective and its consequences in terms of research will be considered in this section. First, the role of cultural biases in the evolution of the national resources perspective will be discussed. Challenges to those biases will then be presented.

Recognizing Cultural Biases

Although Terman and Hollingworth shared a common definition of giftedness according to IQ scores, there is another sense in which their definitions differed considerably. While Hollingworth focused on developmental differences and rights of the gifted, Terman emphasized their potential as a national resource. According to Silverman (1986), Terman's national resources perspective "dominates the field at the present time" (p. 57). Borland (1986) described this perspective as being a "national resources" approach in which gifted children are seen "as a very untapped national resource that should be identified and exploited for the national good" (p. 101).

The idea that a nation's population is a valuable resource is intuitively appealing. Speaking more specifically of gifted people, it is not difficult to accept that these individuals are a national resource. However, this approach is problematic on at least two counts. First, it neglects the awareness of individuals' developmental differences and rights. Second, if the definition of giftedness, and particularly if the procedures for identification and selection are excluding some gifted individuals, then the notion of this population as a national resource is problematic because not all resources are being considered.

Reflecting the limited application of the concept of national resources, and perhaps demonstrating an ageist bias as well, the study of giftedness has been largely the study of youth. After conducting a content analysis of the literature on giftedness in ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), ECER (Exceptional Children Educational Resources), and PSYC (Psychological Information Abstracts) data bases, Rogers (1989) found that the majority of the studies of giftedness were conducted with elementary gifted students. Those females who are most often studied are girls and adolescent females (Bell, 1989; Boyd, 1988; Cooley, Chauvin, & Karnes, 1984; Fox, 1976, 1979; Fox, Pasternak, & Peiser, 1976; Goldsmith, 1987; Higham & Navarre, 1984; Hollinger, 1983, 1985; Hollinger & Fleming, 1984; Leroux, 1989; Leroux, 1992; Leroux & Ho, 1993; Olshen & Matthews, 1987; Subotnik, 1988; Young, 1988).

Studies of adult gifted women (Helson, 1971; Kerr, 1992; Leroux & Butler-Por, 1993; Noble, 1989; Shakeshaft & Palmieri, 1978) and studies of adult scientists which have included women (Subotnik, 1988; Subotnik & Steiner, 1993) are few. Given this small number of studies, Noble's (1989) finding that there are no studies concerning gifted women minorities is perhaps not surprising.

Using the search term "gifted", an ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) search for the period of 1982 to December, 1993 revealed 5,373 citations. When the search was narrowed to identify adult women, there were 103 citations. Nine of these citations included material related to multicultural education or educational programs for minority groups, but none apparently reported research on the lives of gifted minority women. The shortage of studies of gifted women and the absence of studies concerning gifted women minorities reflects a limited

application of the concept of giftedness as a national resource. It is also evidence of the impact of ageism in the study of giftedness. Further, these figures suggest that the bias of sexism, which has been challenged since the first writings on giftedness (Hollingworth, 1914) , continues to exert an influence.

Both ageism and sexism are evident in the absence of research attention to adult and older women (Datan, 1989; Macdonald, 1989). As Walker and Freeland (1986) stated: "The developmental life span of women has been almost completely ignored in research and education...In particular, the personal, educational, and vocational growth of gifted women has been overlooked" (p. 26). According to Hollinger and Fleming (1993) "little [is still known] about women's lifespan development, in general, and gifted women, in particular" (p. 160).

When adult gifted women are studied, it is often in relation to the effects of their dual roles as wife/mother and professional woman (Birnbaum, 1975; Rodenstein & Glickauf-Hughes, 1979; Wolleat, 1979). Hay and Bakken (1991) concluded a recent study of gifted girls and their mothers with the awareness that future research should "designate whether the mothers were gifted adults rather than placing them in a category based on their daughters' qualifications" (p. 159). Such research may be indicative of cultural biases emphasizing women's roles as wife and mother and leaving little room for the study of gifted women in their own right.

The understanding of giftedness has thus suffered from cultural biases of ageism and sexism. And as discussed previously, the historical connection between giftedness and high IQ has meant that when gifted women have been studied, intellectual abilities have been valued above all

others. When considering national resources, other manifestations of abilities, such as the interpersonal, creative, and affective, have been neglected.

Challenging Cultural Biases

The cultural biases which have informed the concept of the gifted as a national resource have been noted by several researchers. Noble (1987) discussed the limited sense in which the concept of national resources has been applied to the study of giftedness. She noted that what has been considered valuable is that which could be marketed directly. As a consequence, "'gifts' that aren't rewarded materially or that aren't technologically oriented" (p. 368) have been ignored. This has meant that stereotypically female gifts such as "the ability to love, to understand, to empathize, to be compassionate, to be altruistic, to cope, to survive, to live life with grace, integrity, and authenticity" (p. 368) have not been studied. Noble concluded that in overlooking these gifts, society has perpetuated "a misogynistic and constricting conception of giftedness"(p. 368).

An alternative to the above-mentioned emphasis on marketable, product-oriented conceptions comes from several authors whose concerns often focus on process-oriented conceptions such as morality and transformation. As early as 1975, Gallagher addressed these concerns when noting the cultural relativity of definitions of gifted and citing some examples of those individuals not studied: "For example, how about the gifted student in the ethical and moral dimension? Wouldn't it be just as important to identify and cultivate these talents as to cultivate reasoning ability? Or more so?" (p. 15) More recently, giftedness has

been conceived of in terms of "higher development," which will "increase the probability that society will be endowed with leaders with moral values, a superior perception of the reality of the self, and empathy, concern, and compassion for others" (Miller & Silverman, 1987, p. 225).

Process-oriented definitions, such as those cited above, may be difficult to measure. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1986) noted that while, as a culture, we have developed precise means to measure intellect, we have done little to study its importance to society relative to other talents: "The IQ score, the GRE test, or mathematical ranking may be reliable and exact, but precision says nothing about the individual or social value of what is being measured" (p. 267).

In summary, studies of giftedness have been influenced by ageist and sexist cultural values and biases and by the application of a product-oriented notion of national resources. Some authors have noted that this limited national resources concept has meant that gifts of intellect have been studied while other gifts such as altruism, integrity, or empathy have not been studied. These authors have proposed that the study of these personal or ethical dimensions of giftedness is also important. In the following section, conceptions of giftedness which include these dimensions and which are consistent with the proposed study of adult gifted women, will be addressed.

Definitions of Giftedness Utilized in the Present Study

In this third section, work that is of particular relevance to the proposed study will be discussed. In particular, research related to Dabrowski's model of emotional giftedness will be presented. This

section concludes with Noble's definition of giftedness which is comprehensive enough to cover previous IQ-based and national resources definitions and sufficiently expansive to include more recent developments in the conception of interpersonal and intrapersonal giftedness.

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1986) have asked what would be required to begin to identify "talent in domains that are important to our survival, such as nurturance, wisdom, or frugality" (p. 271). They suggest that talents in these areas are available to us and will become apparent when giftedness is defined in such a manner as to allow us to seek criteria of performance for these talents. In addition, they have suggested that giftedness does not have to be measured according to the competitive approach whereby it is defined by superior performance relative to others in a narrow range of traits or behaviors. This competitive approach has limited the potential domains in which giftedness could be considered to be a national resource.

Haensly, Reynolds, and Nash (1986) have suggested an alternative "multifaceted perspective ... through which giftedness may be viewed as an ever-widening magnificent possibility" (p. 130). Such a perspective is consistent with the assertion by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1986) that "in the last resort it is up to us to decide what talents are and how much giftedness there shall be" (p. 284). Viewed in these terms, giftedness becomes perhaps an unlimited national resource and, at the very least, it is a reminder that our national resources are much richer than has previously been considered.

The "magnificent possibility" that Haensly and colleagues (1986) describe is open-ended in terms of the variety of abilities that could be

considered. Rather than limiting the concept of giftedness to separately measurable abilities, their definition refers to the synergistic combination of three factors: 1) ability, 2) setting or context, and 3) "internal dynamic direction" or commitment (p. 132). In their recognition of the importance of commitment, their definition is similar to some of the multi-level definitions of giftedness discussed earlier, which considered this factor in terms of "perseverance". Haensly and colleagues (1986) have defined giftedness as a union of the following abilities:

* To see possibilities where others do not.
* To act upon those possibilities in an extraordinary way or with extraordinary skill.
* To maintain sufficient intensity to overcome obstacles over a sufficient duration of time.
* To produce a response (material or physical).
* To share the outcome of the process with society in some temporal or permanent way. (p. 132)

While Haensly and colleagues (1986) and others who have been discussed previously (Cox, 1926 -- Terman, Ed.; Feldhusen, 1986; MacKinnon, 1981; Renzulli, 1986) have included personality factors as a component of definitions of giftedness, Dabrowski (1964) has proposed a theory which emphasizes these characteristics. According to Miller and Silverman (1987), Dabrowski's theory is "distinct from other theories in its focus on the individual's emotional life" (p. 221). Dabrowski observed in gifted individuals a qualitatively distinct capacity for intensity, which was "vivid, absorbing, penetrating, encompassing, complex, commanding -- a way of being quiveringly alive. Dabrowski discerned it in five dimensions: psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginational, and emotional" (Piechowski, 1992, p. 181).

While the expression of this capacity could vary in degree among the five dimensions, being expressed more in psychomotor terms, for example, in one gifted individual, the intensity was common to all gifted individuals. According to Dabrowski (1964), this capacity for intensity indicated a greater developmental potential which in adults could be manifested in "a strong instinct of development, great creative capacities, a tendency to reach for perfection, and the appearance and development of self-consciousness, self-affirmation, and self-education" (p. 57). The manifestation of these qualities was dependent on individual development which Dabrowski conceived of in terms of five levels. Piechowski (1992) has described these levels in the following terms:

I. Level I represents the plane of ordinary living, limited by ignorance, by the urge to protect oneself and gain advantage, usually at the expense of others.
II. When we reach a little deeper [Level II] we come upon the interesting landscape of feelings and emotions, but unfortunately very conflicted and often confused.
III. Level III is the season of inner conflict in which there is a continuing struggle between the lower and the higher in oneself.
IV. Deeper down [Level IV], one gains inner strength from living closer to the center of one's being ... One lives what one believes. There is a profound caring and recognition of the common essence of all human beings.
V. Finally, at the deepest level [Level V], we find ... the point of realization of one's true self .... Will and action are united and operate effortlessly... Life is inspired by a powerful ideal, e.g., equal rights, world peace, universal love and compassion, sovereignty of all nations. (p. 181-182)

Maslow (1968a), whose concept of human potential was expressed in terms of "self-actualization", conceived of human development to level four in Dabrowski's model. Dabrowski's theory of emotional giftedness extends the work of Maslow, and provides a "basis for understanding

potential for higher level development in gifted children and adults" (Miller & Silverman, 1987, p. 221). In its emphasis on development, it represents a return to a neglected aspect of giftedness, originally advocated by Hollingworth (1914).

Noble (1987) has proposed a definition of giftedness which includes developmental concerns, acknowledges the importance of IQ/high performance aspects of giftedness and recognizes the imperative of an expanded conception of national resources. This definition is particularly relevant to the present study. Noble sees giftedness as encompassing: superior ability in one or more of the following areas:

a) intelligence;
b) academic aptitude --potential or demonstrated;
c) creativity;
d) rate of growth or development of a socially desirable variable which is significantly higher than found in the general population -- e.g., moral judgment, ethical or compassionate awareness, leadership, psychomotor ability; and
e) talent --e.g., a special ability or aptitude, performance or achievement, capability or acquired behavior. (p. 369)

Noble's definition comprises the areas identified in the USOE definition, recognizes the value of IQ testing, acknowledges intellectual, emotional, and creative aspects of giftedness, is useful from a developmental or national resources perspective, and includes stereotypically masculine gifts such as scientific ability, as well as stereotypically feminine gifts such as compassionate awareness. While there has been considerable research attention to some aspects of this definition, such as intelligence and academic aptitude, other aspects, such as socially desirable variables, have been almost entirely neglected. Further, there has been little

research concerning adult gifted women, selected and studied according to this definition.

Giftedness Summary and Research Implications

In summary, studies of giftedness have emphasized product rather than process-oriented definitions of giftedness. Researchers have equated giftedness with high IQ and have maintained a limited national resources focus. In those studies in which the definition of giftedness has extended beyond these parameters, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures have effectively maintained the research focus on an IQ-national resources definition of giftedness. This focus has been challenged by those who have suggested that it is time to take a broader view of the meaning of national resources, and return to an appreciation of developmental differences. However, sample selection procedures and data analyses have not yet reflected these changing definitions.

The figure below illustrates the definitions of giftedness most utilized in practice, and is consistent with giftedness as studied rather than as theoretically envisioned by some of the authors discussed in the literature review. The format of this figure, which will be repeated in subsequent sections of this study with regard to other perspectives on giftedness and success, is intended to represent general trends rather than specific percentages. Figure 1 illustrates the research emphasis on product aspects of giftedness, such as IQ or ability, and the relative disinterest in process aspects such as application and creativity.

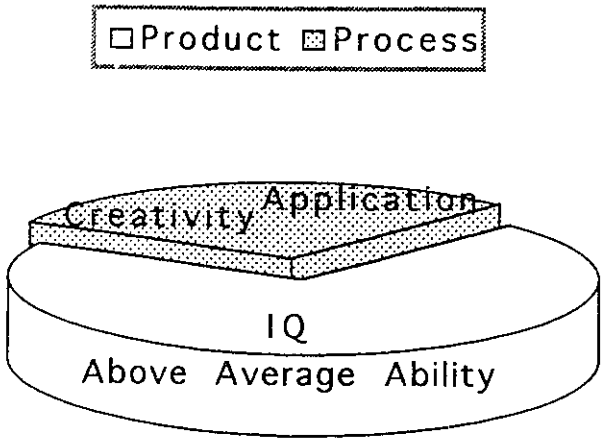

Figure 1. Definitions of giftedness most commonly employed in practice.

The research reviewed above raises three concerns which will be addressed in the present study: 1) the importance of the study of adult gifted women; 2) the need to expand the study of giftedness beyond an equation with high IQ and a limited conception of national resources; and 3) the recognition that, for such study to be meaningful, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis must be consistent with the expanded definition of giftedness.

For the proposed study, adult women will be identified as gifted on the basis of their participation in ultradistance running. The identification of this group of women as being gifted is consistent with several definitions currently discussed in the gifted literature (Csikzentmihalyi & Robinson, 1986; Dabrowski, 1964; Haensly, Reynolds & Nash, 1986; Miller & Silverman, 1987; Noble, 1987; Piechowski, 1992). Two aspects of these definitions are especially relevant to the selection of ultrawomen as gifted participants in this study: 1) The inclusion of a psychomotor

component; and 2) The recognition of the interaction of potential and practice.

The inclusion of a psychomotor component in definitions of giftedness is neither unusual nor new as this has long been included as a key factor in definitions of giftedness. However, some of these authors are unusual in presenting psychomotor ability in non-competitive terms. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1986) specifically rejected defining giftedness in terms which required superior performance relative to others and Dabrowski (1964) focused on intensity rather than performance. Given their ultrarunning experience, the ultrawomen fit this definition of giftedness and may be identified as being gifted on the basis of participation rather than on a competitive basis of winning ultraruns or maintaining ultra records.

The ultrawomen may also be identified as being gifted in terms of their demonstrated ability to express both potential and practice. As with the identification of giftedness in psychomotor terms, the identification of giftedness in terms of the interaction of potential and practice is ordinary in the study of giftedness. What distinguished some of these definitions of giftedness, and made their perspectives particularly fitting to the study of ultrawomen, is their emphasis on vision and practice. Haensly and colleagues (1986), for example talked about the ability to "see possibilities where others do not" and the ability to "act on these abilities in an extraordinary way". Further, their definition included the ability to "maintain sufficient intensity to overcome obstacles over a sufficient duration of time". These abilities seem to describe ultrawomen who have both seen the possibility of physical/mental accomplishments

which are beyond what most people imagine and have been able to realize those possibilities through sustained and intense effort.

In short, this sample selection is consistent with Dabrowski's (1964) and Noble's (1987) definitions of giftedness, both of which include a psychomotor component, and both of which address the concerns presented above regarding the IQ-national resources definition. As well, it fits Haensly and colleagues' (1986) conception of giftedness in that the participants, by virtue of their decision to complete ultraruns of 50 to 1300 miles, have demonstrated an ability to see new possibilities, to act on them, and to maintain the necessary intensity over time to share the outcome of their vision with others.

The identification of gifted participants on the basis of their participation in ultrarunning is important for several reasons. First, this is a population of adult women who have been selected on a non-competitive basis for participation rather than high performance. In that this population is not identified according to IQ or other high performance measures, such as test scores or eminence, it differs from previous research and addresses concerns cited previously concerning selection procedures. Also consistent with issues raised earlier, this is a sample of adult women who are not selected on the basis of their roles as mothers or the dual roles of homemaking and career.

The selection of women ultrarunners for the current study of adult gifted women is thus appropriate in terms of redressing selection biases favoring product-oriented selection such as IQ or academic achievement and it fits current definitions of giftedness which include non-academic aspects. In order to explore the issue of whether "gifted" was a definition these women would apply to themselves, this issue was raised with the

research participants. Raising this issue with the participants also served the purpose of ensuring that personal rather than abstract concepts of giftedness would be explored.

The research questions guiding this study, relative to the meaning of giftedness, were:

1. What is the definition of giftedness?
2. Do women ultrarunners consider themselves or other ultrarunners to be gifted?-If so, in what way?

Success: Definitions in the Research Literature

According to the research cited previously, gifted people have been identified by their high IQ and valued as a national resource. Those people who have been most valued, as evidenced by the research attention given them, have been gifted youth. Conceived of in this way, gifted children are a national resource, and the fruition of giftedness is success, both for the individual and for the nation. For researchers, such as Terman, the success of their research subjects was consequently important since it would validate both the sample selection procedures and the national value of the research. Such validation occurred in many cases. Boys, identified as gifted according to the intellectual performance criteria, and measured for success according to career status or eminence, often grew up to be successful men. However, similarly identified girls did not so often grow up to meet similar criteria for success.

As briefly summarized above, both giftedness and success have been conceived of in product terms: Gifted children as a resource and success as an outcome. In the remainder of this chapter, the impact of envisioning

success on these terms is considered. This discussion is divided into three sections. In the first section, commonly utilized product-oriented definitions of success, as well as some less common process-oriented definitions, are considered. In the second section, research is reviewed which addresses the finding that, among women, giftedness has not always been fulfilled in success as defined in product-oriented terms. In the third section, the absence of an explicit definition of success in research on gifted women, and research concerning their definition of academic and career success are considered. At the conclusion of this second part of the literature review, three additional research questions guiding the present study are presented.

Product and Process-Oriented Definitions of Success

In this section, product-oriented definitions, such as Terman's (1926) which have been most commonly employed in theory and practice, are presented first. Second, process-oriented definitions of success are presented. These definitions have been discussed theoretically but have not been systematically utilized in research.

Just as Terman's equation of high IQ and giftedness has influenced research in this field, so has his definition of success. However, though his definition of giftedness has been subjected to considerable academic scrutiny and consequent revision, his definition of success has persisted, essentially unchallenged and unrevised. Due to its apparent influence, and given that his research is the most extensive research conducted on gifted individuals to date, this consideration of the meaning of success will begin with Terman's equation of success with eminence.

Terman's first three volumes (Terman, 1926; Cox, 1926 -- Terman, Ed.; Burks, Jensen & Terman, 1930 -- Terman, Ed.) included two categories of success: eminence and citation in Who's Who. Eminence, as Hollingworth (1914) had asserted, was highly unlikely for a woman at that time. And citation in Who's Who, was so improbable for women at that time that Terman mentioned only the future possibilities for the boys when he referred to this measure of success (1926, p. 640).

In the fourth volume (1947), Terman acknowledged "the lack of a yardstick by which to estimate the success of women" (p. 311) and consequently discussed only the achievement of gifted men. In the final volume, Terman again considered the meaning of success. Recognizing the limits of this definition, he explained:

> The criterion of success used in this study reflects both present-day social ideology and an avowed bias in favor of achievement that calls for the use of intelligence. It is concerned with vocational accomplishment rather than the attainment of personal happiness. (Terman & Oden, 1959, p. 151)

Acknowledging the cultural relativity of success, Terman is specific about what is culturally valued. And, as with the definitions of giftedness discussed previously, Terman's definition of success emphasized vocational accomplishment and achievement through the use of the intellect. While he is unique in the explicitness with which he addressed what is and what is not being included in the criterion of success, Terman's views are not atypical. Foster (1986) seemed to outline a definition of success based on intellectual productivity when he described individual excellence in terms of "an innovative, productive life of

outstanding proportions.... Darwin and Freud exemplify this type of individual contribution" (p. 17).

For many others, less specific about their definitions, success has been associated with eminence. The implied relationship between success, eminence and giftedness is evident in studies in which those who have achieved eminence are studied to determine the characteristics of giftedness (Albert & Runco, 1986; Cox, 1926; Feldhusen, 1986; MacKinnon, 1981; Roe, 1981; Torrance, 1962; Walberg & Herbig, 1991). These studies are primarily of men or male dominated professions. Hollingworth's 1914 observation that no one has achieved eminence in housework or child care, is still fitting. According to Lips (1978), "success in the traditionally feminine domain of home and family is simply taken for granted rather than treated as an accomplishment" (p. 194).

An alternative to the sex-biased eminence definition, and one which could allow researchers to equally include both female and male subjects, defines success by specific tasks or accomplishments. Using this approach, the researcher selects some task or achievement, and evaluates either the subjects' performance or attitude toward performance. However, due to the selection of tasks or accomplishments sterectypically associated with masculine interests and concerns (Stein & Bailey, 1975), this approach is also sex-biased. In keeping with the emphasis on intellectual ability in definitions of giftedness, the tasks used to measure success/achievement motivation, tend to equate achievement with intellectual ability. For example, Horner (1972) equated success with a top rank in medical school. Following Horner's work, researchers equated responses to other diverse tasks with responses to success. These tasks included design reproduction, intellectual tasks,

digit-symbol matching, geometric tasks, marble dropping, addition, concept identification, verbal intelligence, anagrams, figure-matching, and mathematics problems (Bogie & Buckhalt, 1987; Frieze, 1975).

These tasks all measure success according to productivity. Product-oriented measurements of success are consistent with a national resources definition of giftedness. This view of success, exemplified in terms such as an income level, citation in Who's Who, medical school rank, or the accomplishment of some task, has been standard in studies of success and success attribution (Albert and Runco, 1986; Bogie & Buckhalt, 1987; Burks, Jensen, & Terman, 1930; Feldhusen, 1986; Foster, 1986; Frieze, 1975; Hoffman, 1975b; Horner, 1972; MacKinnon, 1981; Roe, 1981; Terman, 1947; Terman & Oden, 1959; Weston & Mednick, 1975).

In the first part of review of the literature, it was noted that the identification of giftedness with IQ continues in practice, although in theory the definition has expanded. However, in the study of success, the identification of success with product continues in practice and quite often in theory as well. A few exceptions, in which theoretical challenges to the notion of competitive success have been posed, have occurred in the giftedness and sport psychology literature.

Addressing its process-oriented meanings, Hundley (1983) has focused particularly on success in sports. Hundley and others (Birrell & Richter, 1987; Kohn, 1986) have suggested the contemporary emphasis on product rather than process has corrupted sports: "The notion that winning is everything corrupts sport because it reduces the game itself to its outcome (the number on the sports page)" (p. 180). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has studied individuals who epitomize the opposite of the product or outcome focus. For these individuals, success is represented by

involvement in activities which are ends in themselves. From his studies of these individuals, Csikszentmihalyi developed a theory of optimal experience based on the concept of "flow - the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it... for the sheer sake of doing it" (p. 4).

The concern for "doing what one is doing in itself" has been characterized by Kohn (1986) as a process orientation which he summarized by quoting Chesterton: "'If a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing badly'" (p. 81). This process-oriented view of success is distinct from the competitive, product-oriented view by which the numbers which represent game scores, or Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, or salary are considered appropriate measures of success. As we have seen, virtually all studies of success have used the latter as a measure.

Explaining Women's Failure To Succeed

In this section, two alternate explanations for women's "failure to succeed" will be addressed. First, studies which have viewed both "failure" and "success" in product-oriented terms and have sought individual explanations for women's failure in these terms, will be considered. Then, research will be reviewed which has raised questions about the social implications of defining success in this way and has suggested that it may be the construct of success, rather than the "failing" woman, which needs to be examined.

Finding Women at Fault

As Terman discovered, product-oriented definitions of success, such as eminence, did not favor women. More recent versions of this approach have also revealed that by measures such as salary, position, or even grades, women "fail" to succeed. One approach to the understanding of women's lack of success as it has been defined, is to explore the dynamics of "failure" on an individual basis. Utilizing this approach, studies of success involving women and gifted women have often centered around four themes: success attribution, fear of success, the imposter syndrome, and underachievement. Central to each theme is the assumption that women should and could achieve success in product-oriented terms.

Success attribution. In attempting to explain women's failure to succeed, researchers have referred to several models that attempt to explain women's achievement-oriented behavior as a function of their causal explanations. Whitley, McHugh, and Frieze (1986) have summarized these models according to three categories: External, Self-derogation, and Low Expectancy. According to the External model, women are protected from their "fear of success" by attributing their successes to external causes and thereby avoiding credit for success. They avoid feelings of shame for failure by also attributing failure to external causes. In the Self-derogation model, success is also attributed to external causes, but failure is attributed to internal causes (Frieze, 1975; Wolleat, 1979). In this model, women take the blame for failure but avoid the credit for success. In the Low Expectancy model, women attribute their success to unstable factors (for example, "effort") and their failures to stable

factors (for example, "ability"). As a consequence of this attribution pattern, women should have low expectations of future successes.

Although these models offer quite conflicting predictions and explanations, all three share the prediction that women will not attribute success to high ability. According to Whitley and colleagues (1986), none of these models has been well-supported by existing research and "all three models suffer from serious conceptual problems" including the "acceptance of the male attributional pattern as normative" (p. 121). Accepting the masculine as standard means that women's scores are seen as low "relative to men's", and this difference is "defined as self-derogation in women rather than self-enhancement in men" (Whitley et al., p. 119). Whitley and colleague's meta-analysis of 28 studies utilizing these models indicated only two consistent sex differences: "Men make stronger ability attributions than women regardless of the outcome and men attribute their successes and failures less to luck" (p. 102).

Subsequent studies have found no significant gender differences in success attributions (Bogie & Buckhalt, 1987; Laffoon, Jenkins-Friedman, & Tollefson, 1989; Rudisill, 1988). Casting further question about the usefulness of success attribution models, two additional studies offered conflicting results: Bogie and Buckhalt (1987) found that gifted students attributed success and failure to the external/stable cause of task difficulty. In contrast, Laffoon and colleagues (1989) found that achieving gifted students attributed both success and failure to the internal/unstable factor of effort. Based on these studies, the above models of success attribution have failed to yield consistent results for issues of gender and giftedness or gender and success.

Despite these findings, recent studies indicate that researchers continue to rely on attribution models in the study of success. Without discussing the issue of gender, Stevenson, Chen, and Lee (1993), concluded that Chinese and Japanese "mothers, teachers, and students are more likely than their American counterparts to attribute success in school to hard work and less likely to attribute it to innate ability" (p. 241). Cramer and Oshima (1992) suggested that gifted females in mathematics programs should be trained to adopt a causal attribution pattern of attributing success to ability and task rather than to effort and luck. This suggestion is striking in light of the inconsistent results noted above, and conflicts with other research, such as Renzulli's (1986) which has viewed effort in terms of perseverance and task commitment, quite positively. Contrasted with Cramer and Oshima's (1992) suggestion for attribution training above, is Yong's (1994) suggestion that gifted individuals "should be encouraged to relate to their environment with internally oriented concepts such as perseverance, ... task commitment, and effort" (p. 194). In spite of its failure to afford consistent or meaningful findings, the concept of success attribution appears to continue to be influential in research and in practice.

Fear of success. Horner (1972) postulated a conflict for women between social acceptance and achievement and proposed that women must expect some negative consequences as a result of personal success. She labeled this disposition to become anxious about achieving success, the Motive to Avoid Success or fear of success. The Motive to Avoid Success was demonstrated when women's responses to the lead statement, "After first term finals, Anne finds herself at the top of her

medical school class", evidenced fear of success while men's responses to the same lead statement about John demonstrated an absence of fear of success (Horner, 1972, p. 161).

Women's fear of success was studied by Horner (1972), Hoffman (1972, 1975b), and Weston and Mednick (1975). It was also included in Hollinger and Fleming's (1993) longitudinal study of gifted women. Several authors have noted that success for many women is related to fear of loneliness and ostracism (Hoffman, 1972; Hollinger & Fleming, 1984; Horner, 1972; Lott, 1985). Others have noted that women fear that success will lead to peer rejection (Hay & Bakken, 1991; Davis & Rimm, 1989; Fox, 1986). Sassen (1980) has suggested that success anxiety may reflect women's awareness of the emotional costs of competitively defined success. Rejecting the conclusion that fear of success indicates that women are in some way deficient, Sassen proposed that women may have an "underlying sense that something is rotten in the state in which success is defined as having better grades than everyone else." (p.15)

Golden (1988) has proposed that it is not that women fear success, but that "they don't seek it in its male defined terms" (p. 43). According to Golden, while many academically trained women have studied and accepted the concept of fear of success, they don't find it personally meaningful to them. Rather than fearing success, these young women have fears of failure, as well as fears "of controversy, of nuclear war, of what other people will think of them, of continued inequality for women, of having to make difficult decisions that others might not like, of being raped ...." (p. 45). From this perspective, while fear may be an important factor in women's lives, and even in their likelihood of success, it is not so in terms of fear of success.

The Imposter Syndrome. Several authors have noted that women who have achieved success according to product-oriented terms, such as career or salary, often fail to view themselves as successful. The ability to achieve a position of success without internalizing a corresponding sense of self has been termed the "imposter syndrome". The imposter syndrome has been considered to be prevalent among gifted women (Bell & Young, 1986; Imes & Clance, 1984; Kerr, 1985).

A woman suffering from the imposter syndrome has achieved success, but rather than feeling successful, she believes that she is an imposter or a fake. Numerous hypotheses have been proposed to explain women's ability to succeed externally while internally feeling like impostors. According to the Self-derogation model discussed above, feelings of imposterism result from attributing success to external sources and failure to internal sources (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Frieze, 1975; Lott, 1985). In the Low Expectancy model, it is hypothesized that feelings of imposterism are exacerbated when women attribute success to hard work rather than to ability (Subotnik, 1988; Wolleat, 1979). Imes and Clance (1984) have proposed that imposter feelings are related to women's conflict between the need for power and the need for affiliation. According to this variation on the "fear of success" model, women are afraid that they will not be liked if they are powerful. Consequently, if a woman "persists in feeling like an imposter, she can imagine that she is not as powerful as she really is and can thus avoid the negative consequences she fears" (Imes & Clance, 1984, p. 84).

Apart from its reliance on attribution models which, as previously noted, lack empirical support, the imposter syndrome has been questioned for both its belief in excellence as the basis for success, and its assertion

that imposterism is a female trait. Regarding the first, it may be that gifted women's experience has led them to believe instead that no matter how perfect their work or credentials are, they are still vulnerable in a system which rewards men and women unequally. According to Silverman (1986), "The standards for achievement that women strive to attain are not just outward manifestations of perfectionism; on the contrary, they are realistic assessments of the reward system set up in male-dominated professions" (p. 75). Perhaps, rejecting the belief in excellence as the basis for success, women experience the reality that success is not usually meant for their gender and consequently, they are impostors.

Second, regarding the assertion that imposterism is a female trait, some authors have suggested that the imposter syndrome may occur more frequently in men than in women (Edwards, Zeichner, Lawler, & Kowalski, 1987). Others have suggested that such feelings may be characteristic of both gifted men and women. Dabrowski (1964) suggested that the acute awareness of the difference between one's current behavior and one's personality ideal could lead to feelings of inadequacy in the course of personal development. Silverman and Ellsworth (1981) observed this characteristic among gifted adolescents, and described this phenomenon as "The Great Con Game" in which students somehow felt that they were frauds who just hadn't been discovered: "I know how dumb I am, but so far I have managed to fool everybody into thinking I'm smart. Just wait until the next test. I'll be exposed for the fraud I really am" (p. 179). Understanding this phenomenon in Dabrowski's terms, Silverman and Ellsworth suggested that these feelings were projections of the gifted individual who sets internal standards which far exceed external expectations.

Underachievement. A fourth influence in the study of gifted women and success has been the underachievement theme. A broad definition of underachievement among the gifted would refer "to all those who, for whatever reasons, fail to develop their potentialities maximally" (Raph, Goldberg, & Passow, 1966, p. 2). The fruition of those potentialities referred to is demonstrated by academic success, work outside the home, and income. Until success on these terms is equally available to women and men, many men will appear to achieve and many women to underachieve.

Recognizing the differences in men's and women's achievement, some theorists have suggested that society rather than the individual woman may be the problem. Seeking the cause in structural terms, these theorists have pointed to cultural biases which favor men and men's work. From this perspective, perhaps women are under hired, under promoted, and underpaid, rather than underachieving. As Graham and Birns (1979) suggest: "Achieving women are not recognized. Even women with the requisite skills are often not hired, published, or paid" (p. 307).

In addition to inequities in achievement attributable to employment discrimination, women may be seen to be underachieving because their accomplishments are not recognized. It has been suggested that what men do is valued and therefore recognized as achievement, while women's successes are not acknowledged, since "women achieve in areas less valued by society" (Graham & Birns, 1979, p. 307). Research concerning achievement has mirrored the culture in which "the inequality in social rewards consistently favors the work men do and the skills and traits associated with their endeavors" (Barnett & Baruch, 1978, p. vii). If women's achievement is to be fairly studied, it may need to be expanded to

include areas not previously studied. According to Reis (1987), success in women "may need to be redefined to include the nurturance of one's children and family, the success of being an outstanding teacher or the joy of accomplishment from the pursuit of a career that still allows time for a satisfying personal life" (p. 84).

These intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of success have been absent from most of the research discussed in this section. The research cited above has addressed the question of differences between men's and women's achievements in the product-oriented arenas of employment, salary, and academic standing. Considerable research effort has been expended explaining women's failure to succeed according to success attributions, fear of success, the imposter syndrome, and women's underachievement. This research has located the cause of failure in individual women, rather than in economic or social structures, and has been grounded in a masculine standard of success. In these models, the underlying assumptions concerning success have not been questioned, and an understanding of women's definition of and experience of success has not been developed.

Finding the Construct of Success at Fault

Some authors have suggested that it is not success, but the way it has been construed, to which women have objected. The following discussion explores women's absence from the ranks of the successful, not from the perspective of women's individual failings, but rather in terms of the construct of success. This discussion will first address the relationship between achievement and affiliation, and second, the connection between competition and success.

Achievement and affiliation. Theory concerning women and success has considered affiliation both as a barrier to achievement and as a complement to achievement. Considering women's need for affiliation to be a barrier to success, some researchers have defined this need as the Queen Bee Syndrome or the Cinderella Complex. Others, seeing it as an important strength, have spoken for the value of women's ability to integrate the personal and professional. What these two disparate views have in common is the recognition that affiliation is important to women.

Considering affiliation as a barrier, some authors have suggested that one way women may view success is in terms of the ultimate fulfillment of both homemaker and career roles (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Fuehrer & Schilling, 1985; Hoffman, 1975a; Reis, 1987). Hoffman (1975a) suggested that women, sensitive to a culture which negatively views deliberate childlessness and considers high-achievement and career success to be unfeminine, often "feel a need to prove their femininity through motherhood" (p. 120). Consequently, a woman must be able to "succeed like a man in work related activities while simultaneously maintaining her femininity and succeeding as a mother and wife" (Reis, 1987, p. 84). Women who thus attempt to optimally fulfill both homemaker and career roles have been described as exhibiting the "Queen Bee Syndrome" (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Reis, 1987).

It has also been proposed that women may view success in terms of love and marriage rather than mastery (Hoffman, 1972; Kerr, 1985; Schwartz, 1980; Tangri, 1975). Schwartz (1980) noted that while the gifted girl may be "encouraged to study in the field of her choice, the message she receives as an adult is that her success is measured as a wife and mother, not as a professional" (p. 113). Dowling (1982), seeing

the pressure as internal rather than external, popularized this perspective as the "Cinderella Complex". The Cinderella Complex finds women at fault for failing to fully utilize their intelligence and creativity, and attributes this failure to personal and psychological dependence on others. According to Dowling, although women may feel that cultural barriers prevent them from achieving, the Cinderella Complex is really the central force impeding women's liberation.

The models of both the Cinderella Complex and the Queen Bee Syndrome have expressed the importance of relationships in women's definitions of success. Viewed from the male-as-norm perspective of Dowling (1982) for example, the value women place on their personal relationships is seen as a barrier to success. Both Gilligan (1982) and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) have provided a different perspective in which women's connection of the personal world of relationships and the professional world of careers is not measured against the standard of men's ability to separate these worlds.

In her analysis of the characteristics that others have called the Cinderella Complex, Gilligan (1982) submits that the stress that women experience due to their "orientation to interdependence, their subordination of achievement to care, and their conflicts over competitive success" may be more "a commentary on the society than a problem in women's development" (p. 171). While Dowling (1982) described women as being dependent and therefore ill-prepared for professional partnership in the man's world, Gilligan sees in women's interdependence a strength which may well prepare them to make a world where all -- women, men, and children -- can thrive.

Belenky and her colleagues (1986) have also provided a perspective from which the value of women's connection of the personal and the professional can be seen. In their study of women's epistemological development, Belenky and colleagues identified an epistemological position that they called "constructed knowledge". Belenky and colleagues found the women who exhibited this position were "articulate and reflective people", who wanted to "make a difference to other people and in the world" (p. 133) and who were characterized by an "opening of the mind and the heart to embrace the world" (p. 141). Because these women had the ability to integrate the rational with the emotive, the objective with the subjective, the learned with the intuited, and in so doing to construct their own unique and authentic perspective, Belenky and her research partners called these women, "constructivists". Their description of women constructivists affords an alternate interpretation of the Queen Bee Syndrome:

> These women want to embrace all the pieces of the self in some ultimate sense of the whole- daughter, friend, mother, lover, nurturer, thinker, artist, advocate. They want to avoid what they perceive to be a shortcoming in many men -- the tendency to compartmentalize thought and feeling, home and work, self and other. In women, there is an impetus to try to deal with life, internal and external, in all its complexity. (p. 137)

And there is some evidence that gifted women who "embrace all the pieces of the self" are more satisfied than those whose lives are more compartmentalized. Rodenstein and Glickauf-Hughes (1979) examined the career and life-style determinants of 201 gifted women and concluded that women who integrate their personal and professional lives derive considerable satisfaction from both. Challenging the belief that

affiliation is a barrier to women's success, they noted that their findings "seem to dispel some of the myths that have been traditionally associated with the forced choice between career and family that many women believe they must make" (p. 373).

Kerr's (1985) findings suggested that women who have chosen not to have families may also consider affiliation to be an important aspect of success. She observed that "single working, childless, gifted women looking back on their lives are a highly satisfied group.... derive great satisfaction from their work, and also enjoy their friends, hobbies, and community activities" (p. 122). Birnbaum (1975) found that career women, regardless of marital status, "held themselves in higher regard" than gifted women working in the home (p. 418). Whether in terms of marriage, family and career or community, friends and career, it is possible that for gifted women, success includes an integration of the personal and professional.

In summary, it appears that further research concerning affiliation and achievement is essential to the understanding of the meaning of success for women. Women's need for affiliation and achievement has variously been described as a barrier to be overcome, as in the Cinderella Complex, an additional burden to bear, as in the Queen Bee Syndrome, and finally as a particular strength in terms of women's ability to integrate the personal and the professional. The first two perspectives suggest that a woman's need for affiliation and achievement may be a barrier to her opportunities for success. The third perspective, however, suggests that it is both individually and culturally desirable to define success in a way that includes both affiliation and achievement. From this perspective,

individual health and opportunity for success, as well as the health of the society and the society's chances of success are considered.

Success and competition. A second structural alternative to the individual-based analysis of women's "failure" to succeed is provided by researchers who have suggested that it is competition, not success, which women have resisted. However, this possibility is yet to be explored in the literature on giftedness and success. Consequently, the following discussion will consider research in sport psychology and anthropology. In the sport psychology literature, an alternative to the competitive model of success has been termed the Win-Win model. Anthropologists and psychologists have called this the High Synergy model of success.

In researching men's and women's responses to images of achievement and affiliation, Gilligan (1982) noted a theme in women's responses, with "women perceiving danger in impersonal achievement situations and construing danger to result from competitive success" (p. 42). If, as it has been suggested (Fuehrer & Schilling, 1985; Gilligan, 1982; Kohn, 1986; Sassen, 1980), it is competition rather than success to which many women object, then a discussion of success would be incomplete without an exploration of this issue. But what are the options for a non-competitive definition of success? The competitive model has been so widely studied that at times it may seem to be the only model. Indeed, in research concerning women and success (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Fox, 1986; Hoffman, 1972; Hollinger & Fleming, 1984; Horner, 1972; Lott, 1985; Weston & Mednick, 1975) it has been the only model. It is necessary to consider research in sport psychology and anthropology to discover instances in which achievement and affiliation coincide.

In the traditionally competitive arena of sport, noncompetitive definitions of success are beginning to be addressed. According to Birrell and Richter (1987), women are transforming sport through noncompetitive redefinitions of success. Based on intensive interviews and observations collected over four years of women's summer recreational softball, Birrell and Richter noted that the women in their study consistently and clearly refused "to elevate winning to the principle of ultimate worth" (p. 401). Instead, these women were playing "a form of softball that is process oriented, collective, supportive, inclusive, and infused with an ethic of care" (p. 408).

In a study of the epistemological perspectives of women engaged in various forms of physical activity, Bredemeier, Desertrain, Fisher, Getty, Slocum, Stephens, and Warren (1991) found that women "tended to value cooperation regardless of the degree of competitiveness of their physical activity involvement" (p. 104). Although these feelings were common to the women in their study, they were particularly strong for both the women engaged in individual activities and the women mountain climbers. These women disliked competition and wanted to avoid it in their daily lives as well as in physical activity settings. The women mountain climbers believed competition would be inappropriate in their sport due to its potentially hazardous nature and were drawn to this sport because they saw it as "an opportunity for extreme cooperation" (p. 102).

The discomfort concerning competition that was expressed by the participants in Birrell and Richter's (1987) study and in Bredemeier and colleagues' (1991) study may reflect a broader trend among women athletes. Gill's (1988) Sport Orientation Questionnaire (SOQ) affords a measure of achievement which yields scores on three dimensions:

competitiveness, win orientation, and goal orientation. Using this measure, it has been possible to obtain a more specific understanding of athletes' attitudes about achievement. Gill (1988) found that females scored higher than males on goal orientation and males scored higher on competitiveness and on win orientation. According to these findings, female athletes are motivated to meet athletic goals rather than to beat their opponents.

Lichtenstein (1987), also noted an emphasis on goals among women tennis players. She found that women's attitude toward competition in tennis is "a 180-degree turnaround from that of the men" (p. 49). According to Lichtenstein (1987), the most successful women athletes recognize that the real challenge is not to beat the competition but rather to address their own negative thinking and their personal weaknesses.

The Competitive Orientation Inventory (COI) developed by Vealey (1986) measures the relative importance that individuals afford either performing well (performance) or winning (outcome) in competitive situations. In a study using the COI, Gill and Dzewaltowski (1988) found that male athletes scored higher on outcome orientation and female athletes higher on performance orientation. These findings suggest that female athletes are more interested in personal performance goals than in competitive outcomes.

Both male and female athletes are finding that this perspective increases rather than decreases their sporting ability. Applied sport psychologists (Nideffer, 1987; Orlick, 1986; Orlick & Partington, 1986) found that a performance focus is effective for professional and Olympic athletes. While such athletes may continue to be motivated by winning, and may be extremely competitive, they are learning that during the

competition, a performance focus is best. For these athletes, focusing on performance is a mental technique used to enhance their opportunities for competitive success. For other athletes, such as the women noted in the studies above (Birrell & Richter, 1987; Bredemeier et al., 1991), focusing on performance enhanced their enjoyment of physical activity and afforded the mutual experience of achievement and affiliation. According to Birrell and Richter (1987) the women in their study "wanted to play a highly skilled game" and maintain "friendship" and "sensitivity to others" (p. 402).

Success in these terms has been described as win-win, where everyone wins in some way, as opposed to win-lose, where success for one means failure for the other. While not exclusively arising from women, the sense of win-win or a "comtest" (Heide, 1978, p. 201) with others, rather than a contest against others may fit the need women have expressed for affiliation and achievement. Averbuch (1984) cited the importance of the comtest redefinition of the competitive ethic as being "one of the most meaningful results of the women's running movement" (p. 53).

Running, and particularly endurance running, like mountain climbing (Bredemeier et al., 1991), may be particularly suited to a win-win model of success. Unlike many sports, where participants' fates are negatively linked, in endurance sports there is both an opportunity for individual success and the connection of one individual's success with another's. In endurance sports, "even in a race, competitors provide as much comfort as challenge, lend as much energy as they take, serve as excuses to fire up the real competition, the one with oneself" (Ring, 1987, p. 59).

Noting that people are participating in increasing numbers in marathons and other endurance sports with the goal of completion or a personal best, rather than winning, Ring (1987) suggested that there is a growing awareness that success according to the American competitive definition may be impossible. According to Ring (1987), "the hardest part of such an admission is relinquishing clear-cut victory for anybody. But the promise is a sense of community within the competition" (p. 60). The community within competition to which Ring refers encourages both affiliation and achievement.

The win-win, or comtest, model discussed above counters a popular notion that competition is necessary to sports, and is indeed, necessary to human survival. Because of its pervasiveness, it has been suggested that competitiveness is natural and inevitable. This contention has been convincingly challenged by several authors.

As early as 1902, Kropotkin argued against those who emphasized the struggle for existence as a major factor in evolution. More recently, Gorney (1972) advanced the belief that cooperation, not competition is the central law of life. This position has found support even on the level of microbial evolution in the work of Margulis and Sagan (1986) who proposed that evolution has not been a competition between individuals and species but rather a process of continual cooperation and mutual dependence. According to Margulis and Sagan, "life did not take over the globe by combat, but by networking" (p. 17).

The inevitability of competition was also challenged by Kohn (1986) who argued that competitiveness is learned. He pointed out that the existence of cultures who function non-competitively should be enough to

refute the human nature argument. Such cultures offer a model of non-competitive success that is relevant to the present study..

Anthropological studies indicate that in some cultures cooperation is predominant. Ruth Benedict, writing in the 1940s, noted that while some cultures had social structures that were competitive, in which an individual gained advantage at the expense of others, in other cultures, when an individual gained, society also gained. Benedict characterized the competitive cultures as having "low synergy", and the cooperative cultures as having "high synergy" (Maslow, 1968b, p. 69). Benedict noted that "non-aggression is conspicuous" in high synergy societies which "have social orders in which the individual by the same act and at the same time serves his [sic] own advantage and that of the group" (cited in Maslow, 1964a, p. 156). And according to Caffrey (1989), Benedict believed that a "society with high synergy teaches individuals to expect rewards from cooperating with people, not competing against them" (p. 308).

Ackerknecht (1985) studied both high and low synergy cultures and considered some cultures in which there was some competition to still be high synergy cultures. These high synergy cultures were distinguished by a kind of competition which was conducted with "good will" and in which the intent was to make "the opposition creative for the opponents, and beneficial rather than destructive to society" (p. 346). Katz (1982) described the way in which another high synergy culture maximized each other's potential with two phrases: "The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. What is good for one is good for all." (p. 197)

Discussing this aspect of high synergy cultures, Maslow (1965) asked, "'Under what conditions can we drop all our guilt over our good luck or good fortune or our talent or our capabilities or our superiorities?'" (p.

104) His answer, which has implications for those for whom talent or capabilities are a given, was -- under conditions of high synergy. When one individual's gain is linked to everyone's gain, achievement and affiliation are not opposed and everyone is free to develop their full potential.

Research reviewed earlier indicated that some women may have misgivings about success because of the competitive way it has been construed. In high synergy cultures, concerns such as these become "either unnecessary, that is to say neurotic, or else they may become positive hindrances on the free and spontaneous expressions and behaviors and pleasures of the superior or of the fortunate person at that level" (Maslow, 1965, p. 104-5). In high synergy cultures, individuals are free to be their full selves, in the confidence that they are advancing for, rather than against, other members of their society.

In summary, although the model of competitive success is prevalent in the literature on giftedness and success, this is not the only possible model. Models of cooperation have been studied in sport psychology where it has been suggested that many women may be motivated primarily by personal and interpersonal goals rather than by a desire to win. This win-win model of success may be particularly important in endurance sports where participants' fates are linked. Anthropologists and psychologists have noted that individual success is not necessarily negatively related to group success. In high synergy cultures an individual's success is positively related to that of the group. The relationship between individual and group success in high synergy cultures is consistent with the win-win model of success found in studies of women in sport.

Gifted Women's Definitions of Success

In the previous section, it was suggested that further research concerning achievement and affiliation may be essential to the development of a definition of success which is appropriate for women and which may be ultimately healthy for society. Further, it was proposed that it may be competition, not success, with which many women have difficulty. Non-competitive models, which allow for achievement and affiliation, were presented and it was proposed that, for many women, these alternative models of success may be favored over competitive ones. In what other ways might women's definitions differ from those implied in research concerning success?

In this third, and final section of the review of the success literature, research concerning women's, and where possible, gifted women's, definitions of success will be explored. First, in an attempt to glean a woman's definition, studies related to women and success will be reviewed. Finding that this literature has largely treated success as a constant, related studies, which have asked gifted women to define academic and career success, will then be examined.

Success as an Undefined "Constant"

While there has been considerable research attention to women's success attribution (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Frieze, 1975; Laffoon, Jenkins-Friedman, & Tollefson, 1989; Linn, 1986; Lott, 1985; Noble, 1989; Rodenstein & Glickauf-Hughes, 1979; Subotnik, 1988; Whitley et al., 1986; Wolleat, 1979), women's definition of success has largely been ignored. For example, in a study cited earlier, Frieze (1975), without discussing

the meaning of success in the studies reviewed, provided an otherwise insightful review of the literature concerning women's expectations for and causal attributions of success and failure. This is standard in the success attribution literature, which in spite of variations in its definition, has treated success as a constant.

In Subotnik's (1988) study of gifted adolescents, success meant "success in science", although it is unclear what that implied for the females in the study. Wolleat (1979) discussed success attribution and concluded that males attribute success to stable internal factors while women attribute success to unstable external factors. She provided no definition of success. Davis and Rimm (1989) also provided no definition of success, but nevertheless summarized women's success attributions by asserting that "the lower confidence that females exhibit is reflected in studies of causal attributions they make" (p. 358). Lott's (1985) interesting perspective on attribution is concerned with attributions made of others' successes. She concluded that others attribute women's success to the external and unstable factor of luck while attributing men's success to the internal and stable factor of high ability. The meaning of success in her review varied from verbal tasks to medical school standing to mechanics. In the Rodenstein and Glickauf-Hughes (1979) study of gifted women, success referred to "life accomplishments". Although this study recognized the differences between groups of women in success attribution, it is unclear what life accomplishments the women evaluated, and one wonders whether differences in attributions may have been due to differences in definitions of success.

In Whitley and colleague's (1986) meta-analysis of 28 studies of sex differences in success-failure attributions, no comparisons by definition

were made, although success was variously defined according to performance of "academic, sports, motor skill, and other achievement-related tasks" (p. 107). Whitley's group did call attention to the importance of the different meanings men and women may bring to the same task (utilized to represent success), and explained that "this difference in meaning could be the result of difference in importance or ego involvement, familiarity with the task, or beliefs about the sex appropriateness of the task" (p. 123). Linn's (1986) analysis of the contributions of meta-analysis to research on gender differences also pointed to the lack of a clear construct definition for attribution, but did not address differences in the definition of success. She speculated that success attributions might vary for women according to their familiarity with the domain identified with success.

Academic and Career Success

While the research literature has tended to treat the definition of success as a constant, there have been some studies which have explicitly considered women's definitions of specific aspects of this construct. A few studies have examined the meaning of academic excellence and of work and career (Maehr & Nicholls, 1980; Schuster, 1990b; Walker & Freeland, 1986). And one study (Northcutt, 1991) has investigated the meaning of success for women in more general terms.

Maehr and Nicholls (1980) studied the meaning of academic excellence for girls and boys. According to their findings, girls define academic excellence to include social-moral concerns, combining such qualities as "can look after others, can take care of herself, polite, honest, good student, learns new things quickly, writing and arithmetic" (p. 249). For

boys, social-moral factors were not included in the definition of academic excellence: "arithmetic, good student, learns new things quickly" (p. 249). Maehr and Nicholls concluded that their study illustrated "the different meanings of intellectual competence for boys and girls and, more specifically, how achievement and morality are more closely related for girls than boys" (p. 249). They suggested that while success for males is "most clearly defined by situations where outcomes are attributed to high ability", for females "success may be connoted by perceptions of high effort or conscientiousness as well as ability and possibly a consideration for the feelings of others" (p. 250).

Schuster (1990b) and Walker and Freeland (1986) have explored connotations of success in the meaning of work and career success for gifted women. Schuster found that "interpersonal relationships appeared to lie at the center of the lives" of mid-life women from the 1957 UCLA gifted group. According to her questionnaires and interviews:

> For nearly all the gifted women -- regardless of their technical competence, their creative ability, the nature of their work, their income, or their level of 'success' -- the issue of interactive communication stood out as the most salient characteristic of their work lives. In nearly three quarters of the interviews, the gifted women described themselves, their achievements, and their sense of professional well-being in terms of relationships. (p. 204)

Walker and Freeland (1986) asked adult women, who graduated from a high school for the gifted in the 1930s through the 1980s, to define "career success". Responses to this question shed some light on the importance of relationships to gifted women. These gifted women's definitions of career success concentrated on "working at a career that one enjoys, receiving respect from colleagues, and earning money

sufficient for comfortable and unworried living. Affecting others' lives and pursuing a career that allows for creative expression also were listed as indicators of success" (p. 30).

Because these women's definition of success is within a career context, it might be expected that it would fit the definitions used in studies of the gifted cited previously such as Terman and Oden's (1959). However, in spite of Walker and Freeland's limitation of the women's definition to that of career success, the women's definition is unusual. The inclusion of the importance of enjoyment and affecting others' lives, as well as the moderation of financial remuneration to that sufficient for comfort distinguishes women's definition of career success from those utilized in previous studies, such as Terman and Oden's classic study (1959), which specifically excluded such factors.

Northcutt (1991) identified two hundred and forty-nine women as being "successful" based on the criterion of peer and public recognition. Based on responses from these "successful career women", she came to a conclusion similar to Walker and Freeland's (1986) about the relative importance men and women attached to salary. According to her research, women defined success differently from men, with women focusing more on "contributing to society/to others than on earning a high salary" (p. 108-9). Further, echoing the findings of research cited earlier regarding women athletes, Northcutt found that the primary component of success for the women in her study was "achieving one's personal goals" (p. 102). Leroux (1992) found this emphasis even among young women, one of whom concluded: "Plan your future goals around what makes you happy, enjoy the process of achieving those goals..." (p. 168).

In summary, there has been little attention paid to the definition of success and there have been no studies to determine gifted women's definitions of success. Both Whitley and colleagues (1986) and Linn (1986) have pointed to the importance of the meaning of the task associated with success in success attribution studies. Walker and Freeland (1986) and Schuster (1990a) have identified aspects of women's definitions of career success, and Northcutt (1991) has supported the notion that women's definitions of success differ from men's. In light of their comments, as well as the lack of definition, or at best, the differences in the definition of success evidenced in the studies above, it appears that there is a need for research attention to the meaning of this concept for women. In particular, there is a need for research regarding gifted women's definitions of success. Given the prior emphasis on definitions of career success, research which is not biased, either in selection or methodology, toward career-oriented definitions of success would be valuable.

Success Summary and Research Implications

Success has been defined primarily in competitive, product-oriented terms such as eminence, vocational accomplishment, and academic standing. In these terms, success is externally measured by a finished product such as a title or degree. These definitions have been found to be sex-biased and success on these terms is inaccessible to many. To a lesser extent, success has been defined in process-oriented terms according to high synergy models and social-moral factors. These process-oriented measures, which emphasize means rather than ends, are

less easily measured externally and have rarely been addressed in the research literature.

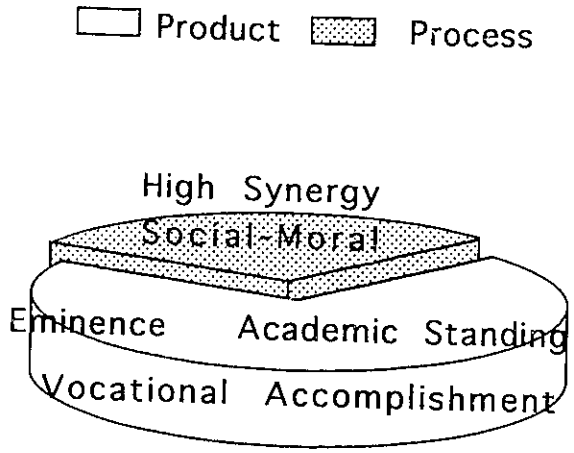

Figure 2. Literature review summary of definitions of success.

Research attention to the subject of women and success has largely addressed the causes of women's "failure to succeed". Research concerning success attributions, fear of success, the imposter syndrome, and underachievement has considered women's absence from the arenas of achievement from an individual rather than social perspective. From this perspective, women could and should embrace success as it has been defined. Although conceived invariably in competitive terms, this model is seldom questioned and alternative definitions of success are rarely explored.

An alternative approach has been to consider the importance of social factors, rather than individual shortcomings, in the study of women and success. From this perspective, it has been suggested that, for women, career and personal success cannot be separated, just as achievement

cannot be separated from affiliation. Rather than viewing this as a failing on the part of women, these authors have suggested that, just as we have benefited from an understanding of the value in men's independence, we can now benefit from an appreciation of the value in women's interdependence. For those who value interdependence over competitive achievement, win-win, or high synergy models provide an alternative to the competitive model of success. Contrasted with the competitive model in which an individual's success is negatively related to that of the group, in these models, individual and group success coincide.

Although it has been suggested that the win-win or high synergy models of success might be appealing to women who have objected to competitive models, this issue has not received specific research attention. A review of the research literature reveals that success is often either not defined at all or considered constant in spite of varying definitions. Interest in gifted women's perspectives on this matter has been confined to a few studies of the meaning of academic or career success. These studies suggest that the ways women define success are different from the ways it has been defined in the literature. In particular, women have emphasized the importance of affiliation as well as achievement, and have focused on the process of success (enjoyment, contributing to others) rather than on the product (salary).

The research reviewed above raises two concerns which will be addressed in this study: 1) the need for research concerning the meaning of success for gifted women; and 2) the importance of conducting that research in contexts which permits the expression of both product and process-oriented approaches, as well as, both competitive and win-win or high synergy models of success.

Women ultrarunners have an opportunity to experience the meaning of success in an arena that allows for both a low synergy, competitive model and a high synergy, win-win model of success. Product and process-oriented approaches to success may also be anticipated in this endurance sport. In response to the current absence of research concerning gifted women's definitions and given the importance of ascertaining their perspectives to future research concerning gifted women and success, the participants in this study were asked to discuss the meaning of success.

The research questions guiding this section of the study, relative to gifted women ultrarunners, are:

1. What is the definition of success?
2. What is the relationship between personal and professional success? Are affiliation and achievement perceived as being complementary or contradictory goals?

Chapter Overview and Research Focus

Studies of giftedness and success have emphasized product over process. Regarding giftedness, this has meant that, both in terms of definition and identification, there has been a national resources rather than a developmental focus. This focus has favored the understanding of some abilities, especially those of intellect, to the exclusion of others, such affective and psychomotor abilities. Regarding success, the emphasis on product is evidenced by the almost exclusive focus on competitive measures such as academic rank, salary, and eminence.

In both cases, the emphasis on product is consistent with a social bias toward stereotypically male areas of ability. Men have thus been over

represented in studies of giftedness and success. There are few studies of adult gifted women and those studies which have been conducted have been product-oriented -- either follow-up studies of young people selected according to high IQ or studies of women selected on the basis of career achievement.

In consideration of these findings regarding giftedness and success, the present study will address the following issues:

A. There is need for research regarding gifted women selected and studied according to definitions of giftedness which embrace an expanded concept of national resources and which recognize developmental concerns.

In response to this need, I have identified the participants for this study on the basis of their participation in ultradistance events. That these women have chosen an activity which requires intense physical and mental preparation is evidence of these women's giftedness according to both Dabrowski's (1964) and Noble's (1987) definitions of giftedness. To avoid the bias of a product-orientation among the study participants, I have selected these women based on participation rather than performance. That is, while they have all completed ultrarunning events, they were not selected because of winning times or distances, nor were women who have achieved winning times and distances excluded from the study. The ultrawomen's choice of a sport which allows for both product and process approaches to success, means that both of these orientations may be represented by the women in this study.

B. There is a need for research regarding gifted women's definitions of giftedness and success.

In response to this need, the research questions guiding this study explore the meaning of giftedness and success. As well as addressing general aspects of these concepts, the research questions focus specifically on the participants' perspectives on their own giftedness and their views on aspects of success which have been considered problematic for women. These aspects are personal and professional success and the possible interaction between achievement and affiliation.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study was guided by two principal research questions: 1) What is the meaning of giftedness? 2) What is the meaning of success? More specifically, I was interested in exploring with gifted women, the following questions: Who is considered to be gifted and according to what criteria? Do women ultrarunners consider themselves or other ultrarunners to be gifted? -- If so, in what way? What is the relationship between personal and professional success? Are affiliation and achievement perceived as being mutual or contradictory goals?

In the literature review, I have criticized previous research from the feminist perspective that it fails to be grounded in women's experience, language and values. It was therefore essential to allow for assiduous attention to women's personal experience of giftedness and success in the design of the present study. This design, which is feminist and qualitative, is outlined in the following sections.

This chapter will begin with a description of the criterion-based selection of participants, followed by a demographic outline of the research participants. Subsequently, researcher qualifications, ethical considerations, interview procedures, data collection and the reflexive journal, qualitative data analysis and peer debriefing, and finally, reciprocity and member checking will be delineated. This consideration of methodology will conclude with a review of the research design with regard to its adequacy in terms of value and trustworthiness.

Selection of Participants

Several authors have described sample size and sample selection procedures for qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the appropriate sample size be determined by expanding the sample until the information received becomes redundant. At the point of redundancy, or when the amount of information received is insufficient to warrant continued interviewing, the sample is deemed complete. Lincoln and Guba concluded that approximately 12 properly selected interviews are typically sufficient to reach the point of redundancy. McCracken (1988), advocating the "less is more" principle, suggested that "it is more important to work longer, and with greater care with a few people than more superficially with many of them" (p. 17). Accordingly, he suggested that often eight respondents are sufficient. Given the in-depth and iterative nature of the interviewing in the present study, a sample size of 10 to 20 interviewees was anticipated. The sample size of 13 was eventually arrived at according to Lincoln and Guba's point of redundancy.

With regard to the selection of participants, Goetz and LeCompte (1984) broadly categorize the selection options in terms of criterion-based selection or probabilistic sampling. Their use of the term "criterion-based selection" rather than the often-used, "purposive sampling" is intended to avoid the implication that probabilistic sampling is not purposive (p. 73). Recognizing the purposive nature of all selection procedures, and rejecting probabilistic sampling as inappropriate in the present study, I have broadly identified the selection procedures utilized as "criterion-based".

Among the options for criterion-based selection, comprehensive selection, which would have been possible and desirable with this population, was precluded due to the lack of financial resources required for the study of a population geographically situated across Canada and the United States. Network selection was rejected to avoid the possible bias of a group of women known to each other, and sharing characteristics quite dissimilar from other Canadian women ultrarunners. The decision to use either negative-case selection or extreme-case selection was supported by suggestions by Marshall and Rossman (1989) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) that for the naturalistic inquiry, the selection of participants should afford the maximum variation in order to provide as wide a range of information as possible. Given some familiarity with this population, and the availability of brief demographic information regarding Canadian women ultrarunners, it was possible to identify extremes of some salient characteristics of this population. Consequently, extreme-case selection was determined appropriate for the present study.

This study was limited to the population of Canadian women ultrarunners for which brief biographical data and addresses were available through Blaikie's (1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992) annual guides to ultrarunning in Canada. With the aid of these data, I was able to select ultrarunners who differed in age, ultrarunning history, ultrarunning performance, and within the range of a limited budget, region of residence. General comments on ultrarunning and ultrarunners and a demographic outline of the participants in this study follows.

Ultrarunners and Participant Demographics

Ultrarunning is running any distance greater than a marathon (26.2 miles). Approximately 500 Canadians completed ultramarathons in 1993 and women comprise 15-20% of this ultrarunning field. These numbers are low compared to other countries such as South Africa where 10,000 to 15,000 ultrarunners complete the Comrades run, an annual 55 mile run dating back to 1921.

The Association of Canadian Ultrarunners is recognized by Sport Canada but receives almost no government financial support. Given that government support is not available, and given that ultrarunners are typically adults, often in their 40s and 50s, ultrarunners are typically employed full-time. Training, which must fit in with work, family, and other concerns, varies widely among ultrarunners. Some train as much as marathon runners and some keep fit with a variety of sports and run moderate training distances. Some ultrarunners run only a single ultra each year and others enter several and may enter marathon or even shorter distance events as well.

Beyond this general information, several demographic characteristics were considered to be relevant to the present study. These variables were determined according to previous research regarding gifted women in general, and women athletes more particularly. As evidenced by the frequency with which they are mentioned, and on their incidence as foci of research, the primary distinguishing variables in studies of gifted women have been age and occupation. However, other important variables, such as relationships, race, and sexual orientation have also been noted (Relationships: Northcutt, 1991; Post-Kammer & Perrone, 1983;

Rodenstein & Glickauf-Hughes, 1979; Schuster, 1990a, 1990b; Shaughnessy, 1987. Race: Baldwin, 1991; Clasen & Middleton, 1992; Gallagher, 1991; Noble, 1989; Scarr, 1988. Sexual orientation: Beach, 1981; Khayatt, 1987; Lenskyj, 1986; Noble, 1989; Rotella & Murray, 1991; Varpalotai, 1987). Consistent with these studies, the following variables will be discussed with regard to the selection of research participants for the present study: age, occupation, relationships, sexual orientation and race.

Two additional variables were deemed important in this study. Because opportunities to train for and participate in ultraevents might vary according to geographical location, this variable was considered potentially important. As well, it may be that definitions of giftedness and success are differentially influenced by duration of ultrarunning experience and by the external outcome of ultrarunning in terms of competitive success. Consequently, the variables of geographical location and ultrarunning experience were also considered. A demographic summary of the ultrawomen according to these and the above-mentioned variables follows.

The study participants ranged in age from 19 to 56 at the time the study was initiated. One participant belonged to the 1970s age cohort, two to the 1960s, four each to the 1950s and 1940s, and two to the 1930s age cohort. The preponderance of participants in their 30s and 40s reflects a similar age concentration among women ultrarunners.

The women's occupations were clustered in the service and helping professions. At the time the study was initiated, three of the women listed their occupations as waitress, two as therapist or psychologist, and one each as student, body worker, real estate agent, health food

restaurant operator, and nurse. Another three women were involved in teaching children or adolescents.

All of the women were either involved in heterosexual relationships or had chosen for primarily spiritual reasons to live either in community with others or to live alone. Four women had chosen for spiritual reasons not to be in relationships and the other nine women were involved in relationships that they described as being meaningful and supportive. Five of the latter nine women were parents or step-parents.

All of the women were white and at the time of the study no women of color and no aboriginal women were active in the Canadian ultrarunning community in the geographical area studied. It is not my impression that the absence of Canadian women of color and indigenous women represents racism in the ultra community any more than the absence of lesbians represents heterosexism. Rather, I would suggest that just as sexism in North American culture has taken its toll on women's participation in athletic endeavors in general (Allison, 1991; Blue, 1987; Blue, 1988; Bray, 1985; Hall & Richardson, 1982; Inglis, 1988; Varpalotai, 1987), the impact of racism and heterosexism (Lenskyj, 1986; Varpalotai, 1987) in the culture in general may have essentially eliminated from ultrarunning women who are thus additionally oppressed.

Nine of the thirteen participants were born in Canada, and all except one were residing in Canada at the time the study was initiated. One woman was living in New York, two in Nova Scotia, one each in western Ontario and Northern Ontario, five in Southern Ontario, and three in the Ottawa area. Although two of the study participants were born in Quebec, none were residing in Quebec at the time of the study, and no Quebec

women were active in the ultra community at the time the sample was selected.

The participants represented a range of ultrarunning experience from newcomers of one or two years of ultra experience to women who pioneered contemporary Canadian women's ultrarunning with well over ten years of ultra experience. About half of the women have set records for time, distance, or age-group participation in Canadian ultrarunning. Most of the women began running for the first time as adults, however three participated actively in school sports as adolescents.

As this demographic summary indicates, diversity in the sample population is limited in some areas. The absence of lesbians, women of color, and indigenous women is lamentable. These women may well hold views of giftedness and success which differ from or expand upon those held by the white, heterosexual women involved in this study. Research concerning the perspectives of these women is certainly needed.

Researcher Qualifications

Given that I have decided to explore women's personal experience of giftedness and success through individual interviews, my ability as an interviewer of women ultradistance runners must be considered. I will begin with a discussion of ideal interviewer characteristics and qualities. I will then consider my qualifications in relationship to that ideal.

Eichler (1988) has noted that in areas of investigation "that are differentially sensitive for members of the two sexes", interviewees' responses may vary with the gender of the interviewer (p. 77). Gorden

(1980) has suggested that gender, as well as other factors, may be important in establishing rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. He has suggested that, in general, similarities on factors such as sex, age, race, ethnicity, social class, and speech, "reduce the etiquette barrier", facilitate communication, and create an atmosphere of "sympathetic understanding" (p. 166).

Turning to the issue of personal qualities, Dexter (1970) has argued that characteristics of a good interviewer are similar for various "sorts of interviewers, whether social scientists, physicians, journalists, or social workers" (p. 61). Chief among those characteristics are the abilities of concentrated attention and empathic understanding. In addition to the overt characteristics discussed above, Gorden (1980) has also commented on the personality, attitudes, and knowledge of the interviewer. He concluded that the ideal interviewer has a positive attitude (especially toward the interviewee and the topic of the interview), and has special knowledge about and interest in the interviewee's subject of expertise.

Having considered the characteristics of the ideal interviewer, I turn now to a consideration of my fit to that ideal. Regarding overt characteristics, I share a common ground of gender and culture with the interviewees, and am similar to many of them in terms of age. With regard to the personal interviewer characteristics proposed by Dexter (1970) and Gorden (1980), I have had extensive opportunity to develop interviewer skills such as concentrated attention, empathic understanding, and flexibility in my professional experience as a counsellor. Although I recognize that a research interview and a counselling interview are not identical, I am in accord with Dexter (1970)

that some of the skills utilized, such as sensitivity to non-verbal cues and competence in observation, are common to effective interviewing in both cases.

My qualifications in terms of attitude and special knowledge, involved participation in other endurance sports and a knowledge of ultrarunning. Recognizing the impact of distance swimming, cycling and running on my own understanding of giftedness and success, I became interested in exploring the meaning of these concepts among those who completed runs of 50, 100, or even 1300 miles -- far greater than the marathon distances of 26.2 miles that I had run! Although my understanding of ultrarunning came from observation rather than participation, throughout the interviewing process I felt that my background was sufficient to facilitate good rapport between me and the ultrawomen interviewed.

Ethical Considerations

In the present study, ethical consideration of the interviewees began with fully informed consent, which included an explanation of the purpose of the study and the possible consequences of participation in the study (See Appendix A). The meaning of consent was discussed with each participant, and each participant read and signed a consent form. Participants were assured of confidentiality in the handling of the interview transcripts and the process of writing preliminary and final reports. As I conducted all aspects of the research (interviewing, transcribing, analyzing data and writing reports), I was in a particularly secure position to ensure such confidentiality. In addition, I accepted a feminist primary responsibility to the interviewees. That responsibility

is demonstrated in my personal interactions with the interviewees and in the structure of the research design, which will be discussed later in this chapter, in terms of reciprocity and member checking. The rationale for these ethical considerations follows.

At the very least, Lincoln and Guba (1985) have prescribed that the interviewer contemplate the possible risks of participation, and having shared those possible risks with the interviewees, obtain their signatures on appropriate forms. This approach to fully informed consent is standard for both ethical and legal reasons. Finch (1984), Marshall and Rossman (1989), Oakley (1981), and Spradley (1979), all extend the forms of ethical consideration beyond the concept of fully informed consent. In addition to asking such questions as, "Will the proposed strategy violate the participants' privacy or unduly disrupt their everyday worlds?" (p. 75), Marshall and Rossman encouraged the recognition and resolution of ethical dilemmas such as "Is the researcher's primary responsibility to the research task, to those being observed, to those assisting with the observation, or to society as a whole?" (p. 74).

Oakley (1981) provided a clear answer to this question when she proposed that the feminist interviewer's primary responsibility is to those she is interviewing. For Oakley, this was a departure from the then standard professional expectation that the researcher's primary responsibility is to other researchers. Oakley (1981) envisioned the interviewer "as a tool for making possible the articulated and recorded commentary of women on the very personal business of being female in a patriarchal capitalist society" (p. 49). Endorsing Oakley's perspective, Finch (1984) has concluded that doing research "for women -- which articulates women's experiences of their lives" (p. 86), is the criterion

that may be used to address the "moral and political dilemmas" feminist researchers may encounter.

Spradley (1979) also has asserted that the interviewer's paramount responsibility is to the interviewees. Included as part of that responsibility to interviewees is the requirement that the interviewer "safeguard their rights, their interests, and even their sensitivities" (p. 36). Spradley also suggests that the research objectives and the research reports should be made available to the interviewees.

Particularly with regard to the interviewing of women by women, Finch (1984) and Oakley (1981) have suggested that these ethical considerations are critical because of the willingness that women may have to talk openly and freely to a woman researcher. Acknowledging that this willingness both contributes to the effectiveness of in-depth interviewing techniques and to the interviewees' vulnerability to exploitation, these authors have asserted that stringent attention to ethical considerations is required of feminist interviewers of women. One essential extension of these considerations involves the researchers' obligation to recognize that "collective, not merely individual, interests are at stake" (Finch, 1984, p. 83). Recognizing that this moral and political position may leave feminist researchers open to questions of credibility, Finch (1984) and Oakley (1981) have asserted that "a commitment to taking people's experiences seriously is essentially a political activity but is not peculiar to feminists" (Finch, 1984, p. 86). Her assertion is based on the belief that "all social science knowledge" is political. Such an awareness underlines the responsibility of the researcher, accepted in this chapter, to be open about all methodological decisions.

Interview Procedures

In this section, the discussion of interview procedures refers to both the first and second interviews with regard to general issues, such as the use of questions or the determination of closure. In the case of specific details, such as informed consent, it applies only to the first interview. Differences between the first and second interviews are noted at the conclusion of this section.

Dexter (1970) has utilized the term "elite interview" rather than the terms "nonstandardized" or "exploratory" interview, which he considers to be confusing. He has described the elite interview as "an interview with any interviewee -- and stress should be placed on the word "any" -- who in terms of the current purposes of the interviewer is given special, non-standardized treatment" (p. 5). By "non-standardized" treatment, Dexter (1970) meant:

> 1) stressing the interviewee's definition of the situation,
> 2) encouraging the interviewee to structure the account of the situation,
> 3) letting the interviewee introduce to a considerable extent ... his [sic] notions of what he [sic] regards as relevant, instead of relying upon the investigator's notions of relevance. (p. 5)

Dexter's elite interview guidelines are consistent with Oakley's (1981) call for a non-hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, with Gorden's (1980) application of the "nonscheduled" interview, and with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) use of the "unstructured" interview, in cases where discovery is the purpose of the inquiry. In recognition of conventional meanings of "elite", the term "non-

hierarchical interview" has been adapted within the present study. This term is also preferred for its relevance to a feminist methodology.

Since the purpose of the proposed inquiry was not to explore the event site behavior of ultrarunners, but rather to search into their meanings of giftedness and success, interviews were intentionally conducted in time and space away from ultra event sites. Interviews were conducted at locations which allowed for a comfortable and confidential exchange and were convenient for the interviewee. Typically, interviews were conducted at the ultrarunner's home.

Prior to recording, I reminded the interviewee of the use of the tape recorder and presented information regarding the study. The interviewee was assured that she would receive a copy of the interview transcript and was reassured that she would have an opportunity to add to or comment on the first interview when the second interview was conducted. During this exchange, the questions guiding the study were introduced. Generally this discussion occurred in the context of setting up the tape recorder and reading the informed consent protocol. In that initial phase, I was most intent on clarifying the purpose of the interview and establishing a climate of safety and ease.

As the interview moved beyond the opening phase, the interviewee assumed increased responsibility for the content of the exchange. Within the limits of my research questions, I was interested in exploring the ultrarunner's world of meaning. Primarily, I asked specific questions to clarify what was being said or asked the interviewee to expand on what was being or had been said. In order to return to aspects of the research questions which would otherwise be neglected, I sometimes reintroduced descriptive questions. According to Spradley (1979), a key principle in

the use of descriptive questions is that "expanding the length of the question tends to expand the length of the response" (p. 85). Therefore, I might reintroduce the question about success by saying, "I'm interested in the meaning of 'success' and I'd like to know what 'success' means to you. Perhaps it means something different today than it meant ten or twenty years ago, or maybe it's always meant the same things to you. Would you share with me how you feel about this word, "success", and what it means to you?" Any questions, whether descriptive or specific, had to fit the flow of the interview and had to be responsive to the interviewee's personality and pace. (See Appendix B.)

In this discussion of the use of questions, I do not mean to suggest that the interview was a question and answer period. Although I posed questions, the interviewees remained the principle speakers. Dexter (1970) described just this situation when he stated that an elite interview "sounds like a discussion but is really a quasi-monologue stimulated by understanding questions" (p. 56). This was the exchange that I sought in each interview.

In order to allow the interviewee to share her perspective in her own way and at her own rhythm, the interviews were scheduled to permit flexibility with regard to length. However, it was necessary to anticipate when and how closure would occur. As with other aspects of the interview, an awareness of the flow of the interview, and sensitivity to the interviewee were ideal to the appropriate closure of each interview. I also believed that termination could be a mutual decision and I negotiated this aspect of the interview with the research participants. When I sensed that the interview was no longer productive for reasons of

redundancy or fatigue, I reflected this to the interviewee and together we made a decision to terminate or continue.

When the decision to close the interview had been reached, I offered the interviewees the opportunity to clarify the issues discussed, to open any additional issues, or to ask me any questions. Typically, however, once we had reached the decision to close, we did not return in any depth to the research questions. I would then pack up, thank the interviewee and assure her of my follow-up to the interview. Interviews typically lasted about two hours, although some were as short as one and one half hours and others as long as two and one half hours.

The second interviews were generally conducted a year after the first interviews. At that time, having reflected on each individual interview, and on the interviews collectively, I was prepared to pose specific questions to individual participants and was ready to discuss the research questions in more depth relative to my emerging understanding of the ultrawomen's perspectives. The participants had received individual copies of their own interview transcripts, had indicated that they had read these transcripts, and had reflected on them (and sometimes shared them with or discussed them with partners or family members). In this way, both the interviewees and I entered the second interview ready to discuss the research questions from a more informed perspective.

In two cases, I was unable to conduct second interviews, and in two other cases the second interviews were conducted within days of the first. These exceptions occurred with participants whose interviews required costly and time-consuming travel. However, in all four cases, the interviews were productive and the constraint of either having to gather the information of two interviews in one, or of having to return

within days for the second interview, was not considered unreasonable either by me or the participants.

As a final note with regard to the second interviews, it should be noted that these interviews were more personal in some ways, given that the participants and I had a sense of knowing each other and the topic more closely. This difference aside, they were not substantially different from the first interviews. In the first interview, there was a sense of beginning with a topic that seemed almost inexhaustible and concluding with the best possible understanding of the topic for the moment. The second interview began with a less daunting set of boundaries and concluded with a sense that everything important to say had been said.

In many ways, an ideal supplement to the two interviews conducted would have been an additional meeting with all or several of the ultrawomen. Such a meeting would have allowed on exchange of ideas among the women and would have been an ideal situation to explore some of the aspects of giftedness and success, particularly those concerning alliance. However, given the geographic dispersion of the research participants, this was not financially feasible for me. Rather, the distribution of the preliminary report to all participants had to serve as a sort of "long distance focus group" through which they could at least read each other's comments and offer feedback to me.

Data Collection and the Reflexive Journal

While there is ongoing discussion regarding the pros and cons of the use of the tape recorder, Bogdan and Biklen (1992), Briggs (1986), Dexter (1970), Gorden (1980), and Spradley (1979) have all cited compelling

reasons for the method of tape recording when a study involves extensive interviewing. Its use appeared warranted in the present study and all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed in full. This was a time-consuming process, typically involving at least a week per interview transcript. This process might have been handled more expediently were I a more accomplished transcriber and typist and had I not been as particular about transcribing with absolute precision. In retrospect, I recognize that for a study which is not specifically addressing psycholinguistic issues such detail is hardly warranted. However, at the time this felt important to me, and I was precise in recording the exact speech of both researcher and participants, with "uhms", pauses, incomplete sentences, repetitions, and indicators of emotion such as laughter and tears. Reinharz (1992) has suggested that this form of transcribing is increasingly being used by feminist researchers who recognize the importance of "women's voices and the way people express themselves" (p. 41).

The initial output of considerable time and energy in transcribing did benefit me in several ways. It provided me with an interview display which reflected the interview in a very personal tone, as it was "spoken" and not rephrased as "correct" English. I also benefited from the process of transcribing which caused me to attend to not only the participants' perspectives but also my own role as an interviewer. Finally, as I transcribed I was able to "relive" the interviews and thus see overall themes in the interview, as well as to become aware of details that may have escaped my notice in the actual interview process. Notes that I kept during the transcribing process were added to the reflexive journal.

Although I decided to record and transcribe the interviews, and to take notes during the transcription process, I also considered whether to take notes during the interviews. The practice of note-taking during the interview has both opponents and proponents. For example, Goetz and LeCompte (1984) have suggested that note-taking may be the most customary form of data collection for conversational interviews. They suggest that, properly conducted note-taking may be less reactive than mechanical recording, "eliciting less-contrived behavior from participants and functioning more discreetly in sensitive settings" (p. 161). On the other hand, Gorden (1980) has cited several reasons contravening the taking of notes during the interview. Gorden's observations are supported by my own counselling experience, in which clients have attended to my note taking and may attach greater significance, whether they think they've said something right or wrong, to the points at which I take notes. For this reason, and in order to attend fully to verbal and non-verbal cues, which I don't do as well while writing, I decided not to take notes during the interviews in the present study.

However, I did make notes following the conclusion of each interview. In addition, being the sole researcher, I had memories of all of the interviews and spent a great deal of time mentally sorting through this data bank. To assist me in this reflective process, I maintained a reflexive journal.

Spradley (1979) has recommended the keeping of a field work journal which would "contain a record of experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, and problems" and would represent the "personal side of field work" (p. 76). Emphasizing the personal aspect of the journal in naturalistic inquiry, Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term

"reflexive journal". They suggest that the keeping of a reflexive journal contributes to the establishment of trustworthiness in a naturalistic design, as it is a means of providing data about the human instrument which is similar to the data which might be required of the paper-and-pencil or other instruments used in conventional designs.

Reinharz (1979) has suggested that the provision of such information about the human instrument represents an acknowledgement that since the "researcher's social and personal contingencies do affect the research," the researcher's task is to "describe and utilize rather than obliterate the researcher's self" (p. 242). While acknowledging that the connection between personal experience and the conduct of research remains contentious among feminist researchers, Reinharz (1992) has concluded that objectivity and subjectivity serve each other. Citing Michelle Fine, Reinharz asserted that acknowledging the researcher's experience is essential for feminist researchers who wish not to perpetuate the "historic silencing of women researchers' active and often passionate reactions to our own research" (p. 263).

In the present study, the reflexive journal was used to acknowledge my own experience, for audit purposes, and to improve the data collection and analysis process. The journal took the form of a series of small books which I carried with me most of the time in order that I might make notes as they occurred to me. Based on Lincoln and Guba's description (1985) the reflexive journal included the following information:

> (1) the daily schedule and logistics of the study; (2) a personal diary that provided the opportunity for catharsis, for reflection upon what is happening in terms of one's own values and interests, and for speculation about growing insights; and (3) a methodological log in

which methodological decisions and accompanying rationales were recorded. (p.327)

Miles and Huberman (1984) summarized the importance of detailed reporting of the qualitative research process, saying "to be taken seriously one should be fully explicit about what is being done each step of the way" (p. 251). The reflexive journal, as outlined above, was designed in part to meet this requirement by providing a structure for an immediate and explicit accounting of the procedures and rationale for data collection and analysis.

Qualitative Data Analysis and Peer Debriefing

Miles and Huberman (1984) have described data analysis as a "continuous, iterative enterprise" (p. 23). The enterprise that they described forms the framework for analyzing data in the present study. That framework consisted of a cyclical process of data collection, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification, followed by further data collection, and so on.

Data collection began with the first interview. Following that interview, the first step of Briggs' (1986) two-step method of data analysis was utilized. This first step allows the data to stand as an "interactional whole" (p. 103). In order to see the interview as an interactional whole, and to recognize and record the context of the interview, he has argued that the interviewer's perceptions of the interview should be recorded in the reflexive journal following the conclusion of each interview. In the present study, these notes were very brief and concerned my impressions of such factors as the tone, major

themes, and overall feeling of the interview. Further reflections from this perspective were often recorded prior to, during, and/or following the transcription of the each interview tape. These reflections sometimes indicated directions for the second interview with each interviewee. In addition, these reflexive journal notations informed the subsequent processes of data reduction, conclusion drawing and verification.

Consistent with the decision not to prestructure the interview, I chose not to prestructure the categories into which the substance of the interview was sorted. Both decisions were based on the belief that the ultrarunners would best be heard if I listened to them on their terms rather than on my own predetermined terms. Consequently, the data reduction process followed the constant comparison method outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Differing from less inductive methods which utilize preselected categories, this method began with the recognition of units of data which could be a sentence or even a paragraph of text.

Each verbatim transcript, in its entirety, was analyzed according to these units, and each unit was assigned a label which described its content. These descriptive labels, called "tags" in HyperQaul (Padilla, 1991) terminology, became the initial basis for "look-alike" or "feel-alike" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 435) categories. The units in these categories were then reviewed with the intention of establishing a tentative rule for including other units in that category. In this process, I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) suggestion that "categorization can be accomplished most cleanly when the categories are defined in such a way that they are internally as homogeneous as possible and externally as heterogeneous as possible" (p. 349). Because the categories arose from the interview data, and because I allowed them to be as specific as the

data required, this was essentially a straightforward process. For example, those statements referring to the ultrawomen's goals or to the importance of goals were categorized as "goals", while those which referred to the distinctions the women drew between living a goal-directed life versus drifting through life were categorized as "gvd" (goals versus drifting). Although these categories are similar, keeping them separate within the larger set of categories which related to "success", allowed them to be distinct through successive analyses of the data. Many categories, for example those related to technical aspects of ultrarunning ("recovery" or "training") were considered unrelated to the present study and were eventually not included in the final report of the study.

HyperQual (Padilla, 1991), the qualitative data analysis program that I used for this procedure, allowed me to maintain each interview as an integrated whole and also maintain files for all categories identified. It also allowed me to easily work backwards from a unit of text, to the original interview text. In this way, I could review all units in a category but could also refer to the surrounding text of a particular interview to ensure that the tag or category was appropriate relative to the context in which the research participant presented it.

When it appeared that the categories were completed, and that continued data collection was failing to produce additional information within categories or information relevant to the research questions across categories, the interview data collection process was considered completed. This point of redundancy in data collection was determined according to a review of categories, and ultimately according to the researcher's "'sense' of integration" (Lincoln & Guba,1985, p. 350). This "sense" was facilitated by the use of the reflexive journal, which has been

discussed above, and through "peer debriefing", which will subsequently be discussed.

Miles and Huberman (1984) exhorted the qualitative researcher to "stay self-aware" (p. 252), and suggested that one of the possible supports for self-awareness in the research process was the "friendly stranger". Lincoln & Guba (1985) advocated that conversations with the friendly stranger be built into the research design in terms of "peer debriefing". They suggested that peer debriefing serves the following four purposes. Most importantly, with regards to credibility, peer debriefing helps "keep the inquirer honest" by creating an exchange in which any question is in order regarding "substantive, methodological, legal, ethical, or any other relevant matters" (p. 308). Second, peer debriefing affords the inquirer an opportunity to test working hypotheses; third, it provides an occasion to develop and check the emerging methodological design. And last, "debriefing sessions provide the inquirer an opportunity for catharsis, thereby clearing the mind of emotions and feelings that may be clouding good judgement or preventing emergence of sensible next steps" (p. 308).

These purposes were served by sessions which were scheduled and structured to coordinate with the research process. They involved the researcher and a peer, Jacquie Gavigan, who had no vested interest in the research process. The peer debriefer had recently completed her Master's degree in counselling education and was familiar with the research process. She was interested in exploring the research questions related to giftedness and success with the population of women ultrarunners.

Peer debriefing sessions were unstructured and prepared for by reading either the interview transcript (researcher) or selected sections of the

transcript (peer debriefer) and preparing questions and comments for discussion (researcher and peer debriefer). Examples from the reflexive journal illustrate how these sessions served the purposes outlined above. In her role of keeping me "honest", for example, at one point Jacquie questioned the absence of "anger" notations in the interview texts. We discussed this, and I realized that in my desire not to slip into a counselling role in the interview process, I might be avoiding certain emotional cues. We agreed that my caution regarding my interviewer role was valuable, and that it was also important to be responsive in the interviews, and open in the transcribing, to all emotional cues including those regarding anger.

At other times, peer debriefing was instrumental in the development of a working hypothesis. For example, following one peer debriefing session, I continued to mull over our conversation and returned home to phone Jacquie. My note regarding this conversation was: "Different perspective on imposter syndrome -- women feel like frauds when others see them as being successful but they don't see themselves as successful because they're not succeeding on their own terms." At this time, I was developing an increasing awareness of how important the ultrarunners' "own terms" were to their belief in self.

An example from another session illustrates the value of peer debriefing in the development of the methodological design. Following that session, I made the following entry: "Feeling less interested in interviewing. Maybe signalling the end of data collection -- just feeling that I've learned what I came to learn." This was indeed a sign of the beginning of the end; the last interview was completed less than two months later.

The final purpose suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for peer debriefing sessions, was to provide "an opportunity for catharsis" which would help the researcher to clear emotional issues which might influence the research process or impinge on the researcher's "good judgement" (p. 308). Peer debriefing sessions did serve this function, though as the following example illustrates, they sometimes did so in an unexpected way:

> Met with Jacquie yesterday. Had planned some peer debriefing although at this point I'm so in the process of writing that I have little to ask. Jacquie suggested she take me to lunch and this is what we ended up doing. It was so refreshing to be sitting at La Favorita with Jacquie talking about the Referendum and the Blue Jays. Sometimes a peer debriefer can be wonderful by <u>not</u> talking about the research!

Reciprocity, Member Checking and Co-production

Both Oakley (1981) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) have discussed the importance of reciprocity as an ethical issue as well as a rapport issue between the interviewer and interviewee. Consistent with her stipulation of "no intimacy without reciprocity" (p. 49), in Oakley's (1981) childbirth research, reciprocity consisted of answering interviewee's questions and discussing issues of concern regarding childbirth and mothering. In their discussion of research concerning illegal drug use, Marshall and Rossman (1989) mentioned other forms of reciprocity, such as confidentiality, sharing social occasions, providing transportation, loaning money, and paying overdue rent. Obviously, the forms that

reciprocity takes depend on the needs of the interviewees and the resources of the interviewer.

Although I was prepared to be receptive to occasions for reciprocity as they arose, it was anticipated that a prominent need of women ultrarunners would be to learn about themselves and other ultrawomen. Therefore, I expected that the experience of the interview, as well as a written record of it, and a copy of preliminary and final research reports would be of value to the interviewees. Feedback from the interviewees confirmed this expectation.

For the purposes of reciprocity and member checking, each interviewee received a transcript of her interview with an invitation to make additional comments concerning issues raised during the interview or arising as a consequence of the interview. Knowing in advance that transcripts would be returned and that there would be an opportunity to add to or comment on the interview facilitated, I believe, the ultrawomen's sense of ownership of the interview and of being in control of its contents. Knowing that the ownership of the interview was shared, I also felt more at ease. Perhaps as a reflection of comfort and communication on both our parts, the ultrawomen expressed pleasure in the interview transcripts and, with the exception of minor technical points, they did not ask for changes or additions.

The opportunity for follow-up was also important to me from a perspective of primary responsibility to the interviewees. During the course of our exchange, interviewees addressed issues which were moving to them in different ways. Since those issues could not all be resolved during the interview, I wanted the women to feel that I was available for follow-up. At the very least, I wanted to insure that a woman who felt

she inadequately or inaccurately represented herself would have an opportunity to express what she "really meant to say", so to speak. Although I was prepared for this, it rarely occurred. For the most part, both the first and second interviews seemed to be unique occasions where the interviewees and I discussed issues which felt profound to us both in that moment, and yet did not involve follow-up.

Both the above discussion of member checking and reciprocity and the previous consideration of qualitative data analysis and peer debriefing hint at the importance of the interaction between myself and the ultrawomen in the production of this study. To make explicit the importance of that interaction, I want to consider both the production of perspective and the production of research. Each of these will subsequently be considered.

While it has been important to feminist researchers to present the perspectives of women, it has also been critical for feminists to explore the extent to which such perspectives are not in any sense pure with respect to the representation of something essentially gendered female. Feminist authors (Lorraine, 1990; Manicom, 1992) have noted that all perspectives are produced from countless experiences, many of which represent dominant discourses. While I may refer to "the ultrawomen's perspectives" in this study, it is valuable to remember that these perspectives are a co-production in the sense that they are embedded in the particular social, political, and spiritual experiences of each woman. As Manicom (1992) has noted, personal perspectives are "never only personal and individual" (p. 373). All perspectives are rooted in context and while this context involves the rich tapestry of an individual's life, certain aspects of that context may be more salient at a particular time

and with regard to particular issues. In the present study, one aspect which may warrant particular attention is the influence of Sri Chinmoy.

Sri Chinmoy is a spiritual Master who promotes running both for his students and for the general public. His students organize running events which include major Canadian ultra events. Although these events are not proselytizing, Sri Chinmoy's philosophies are evident in the way they are conducted. Therefore, while the ultrawomen's perspectives on giftedness and success are embedded in each of their individual experience, they also, to greater and lesser extents, share a common experience of Sri Chinmoy's teachings.

Feminist researchers have also examined the ways that the researcher does not simply reflect a story told by the participants but rather co-produces a story <u>with</u> them. In this way, the research reflects the interaction between "two people: one with unique personality traits and interests at a particular time of life, answers a specific set of questions asked by another person with unique personality traits and interests at a particular time of life" (Shostak, 1989, p. 232). The present study then, is a complex interaction of myself and each woman I interviewed as well as myself and my interaction with the data produced from all of those interviews. Recognizing the importance of this co-production, I come to the same conclusion as other feminist researchers who have struggled with the interaction of themselves and those they have interviewed and have concluded that in the identification of the authorship of the research "it would be dishonest not to acknowledge us both" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989).

Value and Trustworthiness

I will conclude this chapter with an evaluation of the methodology presented in the sections above. First, I will consider the research methodology with regard to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) techniques to establish trustworthiness. Next, it will be considered with regard to Marshall and Rossman's (1989) criteria for assessing value and trustworthiness.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness, in the criterion areas of transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability, can be established through techniques which I have considered in the design of my inquiry. Transferability is demonstrated in terms of a final report characterized by "thick description" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125). With regard to credibility, I have indicated my background of interest in and familiarity with ultrarunning, as well as the inclusion of peer debriefing, member checking, and maintenance of a reflexive journal. Finally, concerning dependability and confirmability, my documentation of all aspects of the inquiry constitutes an accessible audit trail.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) have enumerated ten criteria for assessing value and trustworthiness of qualitative research, five of which are important for assessing the design component of qualitative research. Consistent with these criteria, I have been explicit with regard to data collection methods, and have been open about strategies for data collection and analysis. With regard to honesty regarding possible biases, I have discussed my personal interest in ultradistance competition and have been explicit about my feminist approach. Conscientious use of the reflexive journal further explicated my biases so that I could be aware of

them and discuss them with the participants and with the peer debriefer. I also addressed the criteria of documentation of field decisions in the reflexive journal.

Finally, Marshall and Rossman included the criterion that the "participants' truthfulness is assessed" (p. 149). My intention was to create an opportunity for an open and honest exploration of the meaning of giftedness and success. Within the context of that exploration, when I sensed that an interviewee hesitated to express herself honestly or fully, I discussed this with her. This approach afforded the interviewee the opportunity to consider her level of participation in the interview, and allowed us both to decide what to do to permit a clear exchange. Further, I believed that informed consent was an ongoing aspect of the inquiry, and that an interviewee should always have the right to control the depth of the interview. Since she always had the choice of giving no information, there was less need for her to protect herself with false information.

Summary

The qualitative design of the present study was informed by a feminist perspective. A criterion-based selection of participants was continued until the information received became redundant with 13 participants. A summary of demographics indicated that the participants included 13 Canadian white women, ages 19-56, whose ultrarunning experience was varied, and who represented a diversity of athletic/non-athletic backgrounds. Participants' lives included heterosexual relationships or spiritual community, and their occupations were clustered in the service and helping professions.

Ethical considerations began with fully informed consent and a primary responsibility to the participants. In addition, a system of member checking and a policy of reciprocity were maintained. Researcher qualifications for work with this population included an interest in and awareness of the ultrarunning community and a professional background employing interviewing skills.

The interview procedure was consistent with Dexter's (1970) elite interview and Oakley's (1981) non-hierarchical relationship between researcher and participants. Two interviews were conducted with all but two participants. All interviews occurred away from ultra events at a time and location convenient for participants. Interviews, which were unstructured and flexible, tended to last approximately two hours.

Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. In addition, notes were made following each interview and a reflexive journal was maintained throughout the research process. Qualitative analysis of data was a continuous iterative process. Interviews were viewed both as integrative wholes, as well as in terms of emerging tentative categories. As additional interviews were conducted, categorization improved and finally, further data collection ceased to add either new categories or complexity to existing categories.

Throughout this process, regular peer debriefing afforded me the opportunity to address concerns of data collection and analysis. These sessions also allowed me to evaluate and meet personal needs as a researcher. The trustworthiness of the study was supported by explicit data collection and analysis methods, through member checking, and by the explicit presentation of theoretical biases and assumptions.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

In this chapter, the ultrawomen's perspectives on giftedness and success will be presented. Consistent with the literature which has represented a connection between giftedness and success, the ultrawomen also voiced such a connection. However, in the literature, this relationship has been based on a product-orientation, with success, typically measured in terms of products such as eminence, being regarded as the fruition of giftedness. While the ultrawomen discussed this relationship, their emphasis was on a relationship based on a process-orientation. With regard to giftedness, they stressed the importance of such gifts as a belief in oneself and a concern for others' well-being. With regard to success, they emphasized corresponding concerns such as self-acceptance and community.

The ultrawomen's definitions of giftedness will be presented first, followed by their definitions of success. In this chapter, as in chapter two, the giftedness commentary is not as lengthy as the subsequent discourse regarding success. This discrepancy is based on the ultrawomen's much greater willingness to discuss success. As was noted at the beginning of the literature review, the concept of success is utilized in varying ways and appears to be more prevalent than the concept of giftedness. This may explain the discrepancy in the volume of the ultrawomen's comments regarding each of these concepts. Other possible explanations for the difference in the ultrawomen's responsiveness regarding giftedness and success are presented in the introduction to the Discussion chapter.

In this chapter, it is my intention to allow the reader to hear clearly the voices of the thirteen women interviewed. Consequently, with the exception of brief introductions to orient the reader, I have organized it to represent their views as I have heard them. In the next chapter, I will return to the research literature and discuss these results in relation to the findings of previous research.

To preserve the ultrawomen's anonymity, but to allow the reader to hear their individual voices, I have used fictitious names for each of them. Each of the ultrawomen was informed of my choice of pseudonym and invited to suggest an alternate name. As none of them requested another name, the names in this text were of my choosing and represent strong women from numerous world mythologies.

Giftedness: Gifted Women's Definitions

The contemporary study of giftedness began with a product orientation -- the equation of giftedness with IQ. That connection still existed for the women in this study and their comments regarding a product-oriented definition of giftedness, the IQ score, will be presented first. Subsequently, four process-oriented definitions will be presented. These four characterizations, which emphasized personal and interpersonal qualities, were preferred by the ultrawomen: the discovery and application of one's gifts, belief in oneself, concern for others, and transformation.

The IQ Score

The ultrawomen had little to say about product-oriented, intellect-based definitions of giftedness. However, they acknowledged that these concepts were a part of their understanding of the meaning of giftedness. The IQ score construction of giftedness was the most familiar one for the ultrawomen studied. For most of their lives, they had associated giftedness with intellectual precocity as evidenced by high IQ, with academic or scientific achievement, and occasionally with other extraordinary ability, such as world-class athletic skill.

This construction was problematic for the women not only because it focused on intelligence, but even more so because of its implications of exclusivity. When I asked Freya how she felt about being included in a study of gifted women, she told me that she was "not comfortable with it at all." She equated giftedness with "intelligence scores" which in her experience had been used to grant some children extra academic privileges. For her, this approach represented "an elitism" that she wouldn't be "happy to be, -- or wouldn't want to be part of."

Evan's experience also had been that "gifted" meant "you're placing somebody above somebody else." This conflicted with her personal belief that "everybody's gifted". Marina also expressed the belief that "everyone's gifted: Everyone has their own gift. They have their own precious jewel, their own treasure, that lies within."

As will subsequently be discussed, the ultrawomen personally held other views regarding giftedness, and yet they continued to be influenced by perspectives they had acquired earlier. Voicing this common theme, Juno explained, "It's still hard for me to get that other idea, the genius

part, out of my head." This conception was unsatisfactory particularly because, for many of the ultrawomen, it had connotations of elitism.

Discovery and Application

The second aspect of giftedness proposed by the ultrawomen is process-oriented and concerns the discovery and application of one's gifts. Regarding discovery, the ultrawomen expressed feelings of being lucky and talked about the importance of finding out what one's gifts are. Applying oneself to the expression of this discovery involved striving and perseverance.

Four of the thirteen ultrawomen were or had been students of Sri Chinmoy, an Indian spiritual leader who "is unique among spiritual Masters in his belief that sports, particularly running, is a basic metaphor for the spiritual life" (Chinmoy, 1984, Preface). These women stressed that in each incarnation, an individual is born with the gifts necessary to make what they referred to as "inner" and "outer" progress in their lifetimes. Marina acknowledged simply that in this lifetime she has been given this road to follow and in this way she will express herself, and "other people will do it in other ways." Irini felt "lucky" that she had "been chosen" to be an ultrarunner and explained, "It is a gift that I have that capacity and that I'm given the opportunity" to run ultras.

The sense of being "lucky" was not limited to the students of Sri Chinmoy. Many of the women expressed their feelings about discovering their giftedness in terms of "luck". Lucine explained to me that she was "very lucky" because she had, "through hit and miss and by the luck of the draw, stumbled on" the place in which she could "be a little extra". Diana

described the way she felt gifted as "mostly a feeling of 'Geez I'm happy I went through this.' ... So it's mostly feeling lucky." And although Diana was grateful for her luck, she was also ready to acknowledge her own part: "But I have helped ... I am responsible for making myself feel this way because I have tried to develop myself the best I can."

Not all of the women believed they had been given special abilities. But they all remarked on the responsibility of the individual to develop those abilities he or she did have. Marina summarized this outlook when she said, "Everyone has something to offer, but whether they express it or not is another thing."

For the ultrawomen, giftedness was not so much what one has, as it was the ability to see one's capacity and develop it. If they saw themselves as being different from other women, it was not in being gifted, but rather in having found ways to explore their giftedness. After asserting that everyone had "their own treasure", Marina went on to say: "We're trying to discover that treasure, bring it into our life, and live it." This feeling was shared by several other women in the study. As Freya concluded: "Those of us that are most gifted are those that have recognized their ability, and pursued it. I guess that's 'giftedness'".

Freya recognized that she had done remarkable things in her life, and she preferred to attribute her accomplishments to unique effort rather than unique ability: "I don't think I'm gifted. I just make sure everything I have is used." Marina also considered herself to be an "average" person with "probably average talents." What she saw as the difference between women like herself and women who wouldn't dream of attempting what she has accomplished lies in her striving. She believed that women like her have become capable of extraordinary accomplishments through "their

own prayer and meditation" and through sticking to "one's training for many long years."

In their descriptions of themselves, of other persons they admired, and of the gifts that they considered to be the most important, the ultrawomen referred to a quality which ranged from "perseverance" to "adamantine determination". Freya said that if she were to "presume for a moment that she was gifted", her gifts would be "perseverance," "tenacity", and "stubbornness". The terms "perseverance," "discipline," "determination," and even "adamantine determination" were used fifty-three times by the ultrawomen in this context.

In summary, the ultrawomen emphasized luck and effort in their definition of giftedness according to discovery and application. While some of the ultrawomen saw themselves as being gifted in a spiritual context, most of them considered themselves to be ordinary women who were lucky enough to identify their unique abilities. Having identified their abilities, the ultrawomen discussed the importance of application or effort, which from their perspective was more important than ability.

Belief in Self

A second process-oriented perspective on giftedness concerned believing in oneself. This view was discussed by the women in terms of acknowledging one's self and believing that one can do anything. As well, the ultrawomen elaborated on belief in self in terms of making one's own decisions and listening to one's inner guide. Relative to their definition of giftedness in terms of belief in self, this section will conclude with a look at the doubts expressed by the ultrawomen.

Both in their discussions of the meaning of giftedness and in the stories they told about themselves and others, the ultrawomen voiced the sense that belief in oneself is a gift. Being at peace with oneself and loving oneself were gifts that Kara valued among the most important ones a person could have. After struggling with my question about whether or not she considered herself to be gifted, Kara finally concluded, "I would say 'Yes', I am gifted in that I do have the belief in myself that I am capable."

Evan explained that people who are gifted differ from those who are not, in that they have recognized their giftedness: "The gift is acknowledging yourself." Most often this sense of self was expressed by the women as an assurance that they could achieve anything, i f they believed in it and committed themselves to it. They formulated this in many different ways and in various aspects of their lives. As Juno remarked: "If I wanted to do something, and I thought it was right for me, I'd find a way to do it."

Marina exemplified this sense in her story of the English Channel. Although she was someone who "had never felt comfortable in the water", except for the occasional "dog-paddling or floating around", she decided to train for, and swim, the English Channel. Remembering the feeling she had once she finally began her channel crossing attempt, Marina affirmed, "It never crossed my mind to stop: 'I'm swimming to France'. That's all: 'I'm swimming'". Other women echoed this sense of unwavering belief in themselves. Kara articulated this belief while talking about a 100-mile mountain run: "It's never entered my mind that I couldn't do it." And Lucine used almost the same words when she talked about her decision to enter her first 24-hour race: "It never occurred to me that I wouldn't do it. It

just never occurred to me." In each instance above, and in many different stories, the women voiced a deep sense of belief in themselves.

The ultrawomen's belief in themselves was also pronounced in the importance they afforded their "inner guides", those internal voices that provided trusted counsel. Athena explained that her confidence in her inner guide was based on a lifetime of experience. Throughout her life, Athena recalled being willing to forego "groups or people or situations or drugs" in order to follow her inner guidance. When it came to a question between something outside herself and her inner guide, she would follow the inner guide because "it's never failed me and I have every reason to think that it won't fail me."

Juno summarized the importance of the inner guide saying, "I like to make my own rules." She saw this as a matter of being true to oneself as well as being true to anyone involved. Before accepting anything, "You have to go out and see if it's right for you." Marina described this aspect of giftedness in terms of being true to one's "inner nature": "The moments of true satisfaction and happiness are when we're living close to our true inner nature. To me, that's the ultimate gift."

It would be both misleading with regard to the ultrawomen and to the concept of belief in oneself as a gift, to conclude these findings without acknowledging the doubts that the ultrawomen communicated. Given that the purpose of the interview was to address the ultrawomen's beliefs and feelings about giftedness and success, the subject of doubts was not a primary focus. However, our conversations were conducive to personal reflection, and within this context, three of the thirteen ultrawomen conveyed some uncertainties. These doubts are evidence that the gift of

belief in one's self is not constant, or at least not as constant for all of those who possess it in some degree.

In Evan's definition of giftedness, there was an understanding of the importance of a loving sense of self and of the effect of doubting that self. She defined giftedness as "having an open heart", which for her meant, "innocence, naiveté, joy of life", and "just not being afraid of what's out there". However, she recognized that when she herself doubts her own gift of "an open heart" she is unwilling to accept others' appreciation of this gift in her. She remarked on the importance of developing her own sense of self, believing that only when she has learned to fully acknowledge herself, will she be able to accept others' esteem for her gift of having an open heart.

Juno communicated the belief that self-esteem was good in moderation. She wished to have just the "right amount" of self-esteem so that she would be "quietly confident". When Juno thinks about her own accomplishments, she is not always impressed. Usually, she said, she just thinks, "So what." When she evaluates herself in relation to those she admires, she felt that she would "pale in comparison". As she discussed this she suggested that occasional doubts were to be expected and that everyone must "feel inferior at times."

Lucine was conscious that since she had begun running, her body image had improved considerably. However, this wasn't something she was certain she could sustain if she weren't able to run. An injury, or any threat to her ability to run was also a threat to her sense of self. Lucine talked about a time when she was unable to run and experienced "a dark night of the soul". She recalled that her grief during that time was almost unbearable as she had lost herself as a runner, and as a person. She hoped

she could sustain another period during which she would be unable to run without losing her sense of self worth, but she was not sure.

Juno reported the need to run to sustain her sense of self in a different way. As physical difficulties made extensive training increasingly difficult for Juno, racing has increasingly become a matter of "gutting it out". Though she had run over 70 marathons and ultras, each time she entered another long distance event, Juno had to prove to herself once again that she could still do it.

In summary, the ultrawomen described their belief in themselves as a gift. They expressed this gift in terms of a profound belief in their own abilities, as well as according to the value they placed on following their own "inner guide." They reported few doubts about themselves. For some, these doubts were something to be overcome, while for others they were an expected part of the human experience.

Compassion

Compassion was an essential aspect of giftedness for the ultrawomen studied. In this third, process-oriented view they explicated the belief that giftedness meant caring in personal relationships, as well as the ability to be caring in a global sense in terms of a concern for the well-being of all people. This meant being a beneficial influence, being understanding, helping others, and working toward oneness/world peace.

Although Marina recognized that someone might be gifted "in an obvious way, like being an artist, or being a runner," she also noted that someone might be gifted by "just being good with people,". Other terms used by the ultrawomen to describe this aspect of giftedness were to "make people

feel comfortable," to "have a nice way with people," "understanding," "good listening abilities," "empathy," and being able to "put yourself in someone else's shoes."

Several of the women described this aspect of giftedness as "compassion." Juno identified compassion as a gift that we might need "especially among world leaders". The ultrawomen believed that the gift of compassion must be extended beyond their immediate relationships.

The emphasis the women placed on compassion was evident in their commitment to volunteer work and community service. All of the ultrawomen stressed this element of their lives in some way. Their volunteer work took numerous forms: they used their running to raise funds which they contributed to charitable organizations; they shared their insights and expertise with novice runners; they wrote books to pass on what they had learned to others; they often volunteered at races to lend support to other runners; and, they worked as volunteers on crisis lines and organized community fund-raising events.

Juno had logged more than thirty-seven hundred hours as a crisis phone line volunteer operator. When she described her volunteer work, she didn't talk about what she was doing for others, but rather what it meant to her: "You do it to bring depth to your life, for one thing. But, you do it because the secret of happiness is doing something for someone else."

In explaining her compassionate reaching out to others, Kara conveyed a sentiment that many of the ultrawomen shared with me. She said that if she had something that she could offer or knew something that she could say to help someone else, then she could not understand why she would keep that to herself. And this desire to share what she could applied to

all areas of her life: "In running, in work, in living, I mean, you don't keep it in."

For some of the women, like Marina, the gift of compassion extended beyond her caring for people in her own community. She articulated that she "responds very deeply" to the vision of "oneness" and "people living in harmony around the world." This gift is connected for Marina with the gift of self discussed above. According to her, along with the gift of peace within yourself, comes the gift of compassion, because "you want everyone to be happy."

In summary, the ultrawomen defined giftedness in terms of simple, everyday acts of understanding, empathy and compassion. They believed that these acts were important in one's immediate relationships as well as in the larger community. Some also saw this aspect of giftedness in a global sense and expressed a feeling of compassion for all people.

Transformation

The fourth process-oriented definition of giftedness proposed by the ultrawomen involved transformation. For all of them, running was a means to personal development, and for some, it was also a means to spiritual growth. For those women for whom there was a connection between running and the perfection of spiritual gifts, as well as for others, transformative experiences sometimes occurred while running. Some of those experiences seemed quite idiosyncratic, and their relationship to personal growth is not clear. They might simply be described as welcome diversions in the midst of intense physical and mental effort. These will be discussed first. Others which might also be

seen as agents of integration and transformation will subsequently be described.

Freya and Lucine described their experiences as "hallucinations". In one of those experiences, while running an ultra on a wooded trail, Freya recalled a period during which she believed she was a "scout for the Reds during the Civil War". She remembered that as a scout, she was worried about being seen and so she ran along hiding behind trees along the course. Chuckling, she told me she still wonders how she really ran and what spectators along the course might have thought if they did see a woman in Canadian flag shorts, "darting from tree to tree!"

Kara's experience was more personal and was experienced by her as a profound gift. During an ultra in Colorado, she was coming down a trail from an elevation of 13,000 feet when she sensed that her father had come to help her. The feeling of his presence was so precise that she told me emphatically where he was: "It was <u>this</u> shoulder, not <u>that</u> shoulder. He was very definitely there, getting me down." Although he had been unable to tell her while he was living, Kara felt he had come to support her in her descent of the mountain to let her know that he really did approve of her. This experience, which lasted a few hours, helped her on that day, and left her with a sense of being at peace with her father.

Sometimes the gift of transformation included changes in physical sensation and/or ability. Freya explained that without the ability to feel that she is "outside of [her]self" she would be too attached to her pain and it would stop her. Marina described the change in her relationship with pain in a different way. Sometimes great pain or exhaustion had suddenly disappeared during her ultras. In one such instance, in a multi-day race, she remembered suddenly being able to run like it was the "first day" of

the race: "For seven miles, I had no pain. It was like God's grace. It was really a gift." She was not alone in that particular experience, and she remembered the elation that she and other runners felt: "We were laughing! We were dancing!"

In one of the most physically transforming experiences that Marina recalled, she was competing in a 4 X 100 relay at the end of a day of competing in other track events. She was exhausted until the race began and then something changed: "I took the baton, and it's like my feet weren't touching the ground! It was an unbelievable experience!" Marina believed that run was the fastest she had ever or would ever run and she recalled that her sense of awe about it had been shared by others who had witnessed the event. She described the run as being "an incredible thing" which she compared to psychic events she had read about in the lives of other athletes (Murphy & White, 1978).

Marina also described "higher experiences" in which she felt a sense of being in the present moment and being very much at peace. During one such experience, she felt like she was a river, "just flowing along, hour after hour." Irini described experiences similar to Marina's and distinguished these times from her everyday life in which she was "not quite so sharp about things, not as intent." During her ultras, she often experienced "something that's like a happiness and peace that you don't have on an everyday level."

Holda who, like Irini and Marina, is a student of Sri Chinmoy, described similar experiences. One occurred when she was entered in a 700-Mile race which was held on an oval in a park in New York City. During this race, she recollected being aware of "all the people who came to the park.... for solace, or some comfort, or a place for a two-hour vacation."

Her awareness of these people's comings and goings was different from her ordinary awareness: "I experienced all these ins and outs of the park as if a day would pass in an hour. And I felt moved by all these things that were happening inside the park."

Kara also recalled a circumstance in which she had felt a profound shift in her relationship with the world around her. At that time, she felt the beauty of the natural world, and her experience of awe, and oneness with nature had left her with a deep awareness that life was more than she might have otherwise known. She struggled to find words to explain this awareness, and concluded: "You just know there's got to be, there's something, more."

Expressing the change that had taken place in her after a transformative experience in the 1300-mile race, Irini said that she had learned to overcome her worries. She explained the importance of that lesson in terms of greater freedom and happiness: "When you conquer certain forces in you, you have more freedom and more happiness and more possibility to just, feel more, close to your experiences, without that mental filter." Irini's comments point to a life lived more fully as a result of insight gained from transcendent experience. For Holda, one of the transformative aspects of her transcendent experiences was a further understanding of her unlimited capacity. Having had the experience of feeling that she had exhausted her own resources, and then suddenly being filled with new energy and capacity had deepened Holda's faith: "We have unlimited potential, unlimited capacity. Because ... if you tune in to the highest source, then, ... (you) have all of that to draw on".

While all of the ultrawomen who recounted experiences of transcendence found them to be positive, those just cited were of

particular importance. Experiences such as these brought unusual insight, ability, or peace and the ultrawomen were grateful for them. These experiences remained with them, and changed their lives in some way.

That aspect of giftedness which Holda called a "depth of the soul", has been presented in this section on the ultrawomen's experiences of transformation and transcendence. These experiences of transcendence were rare for some of the ultrawomen, and more common for others. Delineating these experiences that occurred during the intense and sustained effort of ultrarunning, the ultrawomen talked about hallucinations that entertained and those which had a beneficial effect. They also talked about "higher experiences" which were sometimes transformative in the immediate sense of offering a renewed capacity to run. As well, these experiences were transcendent in the more timeless sense of deepening the women's faith, enhancing their sense of the beauty of the natural world, or extending their belief in their own potential and capacity.

Summary

The ultrawomen defined giftedness in product-oriented terms according to IQ. In process-oriented terms, giftedness meant discovery and application, belief in self, compassion, and transformation. These aspects of giftedness are represented in Figure 3.

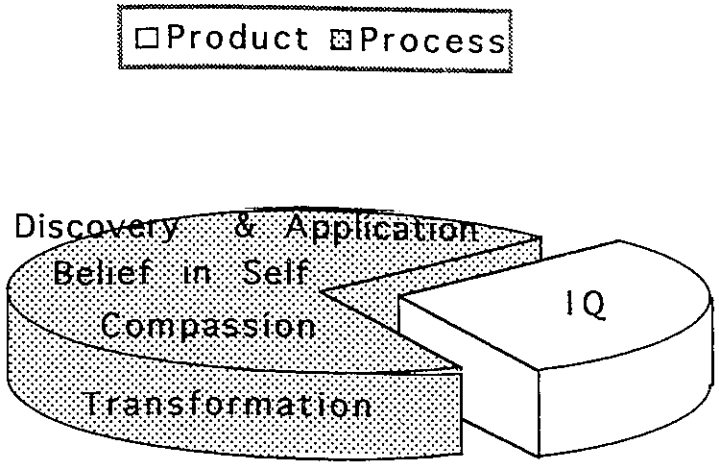

Figure 3. Summary of ultrawomen's definitions of giftedness.

The ultrawomen expressed familiarity with and reservations about traditional definitions of giftedness based on factors such as high IQ or some other special ability. Such definitions retained meaning for them but did not represent all of their personal beliefs about giftedness. They placed a greater emphasis on process-oriented definitions which focused on discovery and application, belief in self, concern for others, and transformation.

With regard to discovery and application, the ultrawomen differed on whether or not they had been given special abilities. However, they agreed that two important aspects of giftedness were: 1) knowing what your abilities were and 2) using them to their fullest. Although many of them expressed a sense of gratitude or luck for having had the opportunity to express their abilities, they also emphasized the importance of their own effort in the application of their abilities. They admired qualities of

perseverance and determination which they envisioned both as gifts and as being important in the development of their giftedness.

The ultrawomen proposed that they were gifted in terms of their belief in themselves. They expressed certainty about their capacity to do anything to which they committed themselves, and they affirmed their confidence in their own inner direction. While the sense of belief in themselves was strongly present in each of the women interviewed, three of these thirteen women also recalled occasions of self-doubt.

Giftedness was also conceptualized in the immediate personal terms of being "good with other people" as well as in the more global term of "compassion". The ultrawomen conveyed a sense of deep respect for this aspect of giftedness in their many comments about the importance of caring for others. As well, the value the women placed on this aspect of giftedness was demonstrated in their numerous acts of community service.

For some of the ultrawomen, giftedness had a spiritual meaning. For these women, as well as for others who presented no spiritual beliefs, experiences of transformation sometimes occurred. In the process of the intense struggle of an ultramarathon, hallucinations, presences, transformations of physical ability, and higher experiences transpired. All of these experiences were considered to have been positive, and some were felt by the women to have been gifts of a profound nature.

Success: Gifted Women's Definitions

As was seen in the first part of this chapter, the ultrawomen defined giftedness according to five themes, one of which was product-oriented (IQ), and four which were process-oriented (discovery and application, belief in self, concern for others, and transformation). Regarding success, however, the ultrawomen's definitions centered around three themes which emphasized process, but each of which also was considered in product-oriented terms. These themes were: striving, personal achievement, and relationships with others.

Striving, from a product perspective, meant competition and outcome. From a process outlook, striving meant living consciously, expecting obstacles, and surpassing limits. Personal achievement from a product viewpoint was related to public recognition, whereas in process-oriented terms personal achievement was measured according to inner recognition, flexibility and integrity. In terms of relationships with others, the ultrawomen expressed concerns about the interpersonal implications of a product-oriented, competitive approach, while they embraced a process-oriented definition of success as community.

Success and Striving

One of the three major themes in the ultrawomen's definitions of success is the importance of striving. Measured in product-oriented terms, striving meant placing first in a race, or achieving a personal best in terms of time for a particular course or distance. These competition and outcome-oriented measures of success were important in some way

for each of the ultrawomen. At the same time, they all asserted that these could not be the only measure of success. Defining success from a process-oriented perspective, the ultrawomen also equated striving with living consciously, expecting obstacles, and surpassing limits. Their insights regarding striving in this process-oriented form will follow the product-oriented segment on competition and outcome orientation.

Competition and Outcome

All of the ultrawomen accepted product-oriented measures of success to some extent. In varying ways, they all attached importance to their times and distances. In addition to these performance measures, some of the women also defined success competitively. In the following discussion, and throughout this study, competition refers to mutually exclusive goal attainment, as defined by Kohn (1986), and includes both structural and intentional aspects. In situations which are structurally competitive, the participants' "fates are negatively linked ... two or more individuals are trying to achieve a goal than cannot be achieved by all of them" (Kohn, 1986, p. 4) Intentional competition has to do with the participants' attitudes of desiring to be number one. In the case of ultrarunning, an event may offer awards for placing first, second, or third and thus be structurally competitive. However, the participants may enter the race desiring to win one of those awards, and so be intentionally competitive, or they may enter with other goals which are not competitive.

Lucine, Marina, Gaea, and Juno placed particular emphasis on the competitive aspect of success. In their acceptance of intentional competition, these four women were somewhat different from the other

nine ultrawomen. At the same time, some of their views on competition were similar to those held by the other ultrawomen, and among them they formulated views of competition that were most diverse.

Lucine, more than the other women in the study, emphasized competitive and outcome-oriented measures of success. For her, setting national records and achieving international ranking were important measures of her success. She also measured her ability as a coach partially in these terms and took pride in the rankings of those she had coached. As well, she valued her academic degrees and while she appreciated that they represented her ongoing commitment to learning, she also acknowledged that a degree, such as a Ph.D. was important to her because "it's the top degree".

However, Lucine's feelings about competition were complex and changing. In addition to the competitive measures of success noted above, Lucine also mentioned non-competitive measures such as her capacity to teach effectively, to achieve a comfortable standard of living, and to have a "worthwhile family". And then she concluded, "But that's all superficial". Although she had previously measured herself by product-oriented standards of success, it seemed that the standard was being re-evaluated. She summarized these two views of success by recalling a grueling 24-hour race in which, due to illness, she was unable to take food or fluids for the last 16 hours of the race. In that race, she was successful both in process and product terms: "I did the best I could do under the circumstances. I still won." Although Lucine acknowledged her striving from the process perspective of doing her best, the product perspective of the outcome still had the last word: "I still won."

Both Marina and Gaea competed in track events as young people. Marina remembered these competitive events as having been a playful and beneficial experience which affirmed her sense of her own athletic ability. While competition was no longer a primary focus for Marina, her early experiences seemed to have given her a base from which she continued to be able to comfortably enter into this aspect of running and maintain an easy-going attitude. Unlike many of the ultrawomen (whose concerns about the interpersonal implications of competition will be presented in the section on "Success and Relationships with Others"), Marina seemed quite at ease with both running for its own sake and with competitive running. Regarding the latter, she laughed and said, "If I'm competing, then, God, I'll just have to run as fast as I can and stay ahead of them!"

Gaea's early experience as a track athlete was an intense, highly competitive, and often painful experience. In her early running experience, she recalled having a very limited, product-only definition of success: "Success was defined by my coach, and it had to mean winning, or being very close to it." Recalling this experience, Gaea was surprised by the emotion she continued to feel:

> I didn't think it would make me cry like this. But I get very, angry, when I think that really, for so many years I was, tyrannized. There was too much control, and too much pressure from the coach, and .... not enough running so that it develops you as a person, ... and doing the best you can.

As Gaea matured, she struggled to redefine success. At the time of the study, she was emphatic about the importance of measuring success by several self-defined, process and product-oriented parameters: "I make sure that I can, in some way, do something that makes me feel good about

it." In her mental preparation for each race she explained that she sets outcome goals related to time or placing and she also sets process goals related to how she will run. In this way, she is ensured of the opportunity for success in each race.

While one of those pre-race goals was usually competitive, Gaea saw this in a context of supporting other runners and running for her own pleasure. She acknowledged, as did most of the women, that she enjoyed placing or winning an event. And she, like the other women, saw this in terms of her performance, rather than in terms of beating someone else: "For sure, I can win and it can make me happy because it's one of my goals to achieve these certain things. But I'm not doing it to beat someone else. ... You don't have to beat someone to do well." Within the terms of Kohn's definition, Gaea's participation in running events is both structurally and intentionally competitive. The race is structured competitively and in her desire to win, Gaea is intentionally competitive. At the same time, she moderates that competitiveness with a spirit of pleasure in the process of the event and in her pronounced support of other runners.

Like other ultrarunners, two of Gaea's parameters for success are the distance she runs in a timed race and the time she runs in a distance race. These measures set personal outcome standards against which ultrarunners gauge their progress. Gaea is one of the women who is steadily improving these outcome standards. Her depiction of their importance reflects a product and process perspective on success: "I want to chase those times, that I've set in different races, and beat them. But even if that never comes, I can still do things along the way that make me happy."

The three ultrawomen cited above have all had the capacity to be first place finishers in ultra races. However, so have many of the other women in the study who were avowedly less competitive. Nor is competitiveness restricted to those vying for first place. Reflecting a different competitive perspective on product-oriented measures of success, Juno explained that given her years of running, she would find finishing last in a race hard to accept. She expected a certain product of herself, and a last place finish would cause her to question, "what right have I got to be here if I'm this bad?"

While Lucine, Gaea, Marina, and Juno differed from the other women interviewed in their attested competitiveness, all of the women accepted competition as one aspect of ultrarunning. The ultrawomen also shared a belief that competition was neither sufficient nor desirable as a primary reason for running ultras. Expressing this perspective, Kara acknowledged the element of competition in ultrarunning and then concluded, "But that's to me not what it's all about. ... I would have quit a long time ago, if winning it was the only reason I ran." Gaea's sentiments were quite similar when she compared how she feels now, with the previous experience of running only to win: "I would have quit a long time ago if that's all it meant. I would have had to quit!"

All of the ultrawomen concurred with Gaea and Kara in the belief that competition could not be the only reason that someone ran ultras. They believed that an ultra is simply too difficult to survive on the single motivation of competition. Expressing this perspective, Holda explained: "When you go a very, very long distance, the only way you can do it is from something inner. You can't carry out such a feat the way people normally can. You can't get by on competitiveness."

In summary, while all of the ultrawomen accepted in some way such outcome-oriented measures of success as times for a distance or distance within a particular time frame, only four of them were expressly competitive. Even among these women, product-oriented measures were complemented by process-oriented measures of success. The ultrawomen expounded the conviction that competition was insufficient as a primary source of motivation for ultrarunning and that ultrarunners must define success in other terms.

Living Consciously

In this segment, the ultrawomen's process-oriented definitions of success as striving will be presented. Brigid described this concept of striving by saying: "It's something that you do in an ongoing way. It's not something you get to, and that's success, but it's the way you live your life." Also expressing this perspective and contrasting it with a product-oriented approach, Evan explained:

> Success, the word "success" almost feels negative to me. "Success" means that you've made it "up here". Where you haven't made it "up here", you've made it to where you want to be at the time. ... So success to me, doesn't have to be way up here. It's just at the moment. Success to me is just being, at this time, fully here, and fully present, and ... just fully aware.

Being "fully present" meant several things to the ultrawomen which I have summarized in the term "living consciously". Living consciously included trying hard and having an inner urge to grow. As well, this concept refers to the belief that the process of striving means expecting obstacles and surpassing limits.

When the ultrawomen named the qualities they admired in people whom they considered to be successful, they talked about the importance of consciously living life in an effort to be one's best. When articulating this quality, the ultrawomen talked about "trying", about having an "inner urge", and about having a moment-to-moment consciousness about how one lived in accord with one's goals. Defining success in terms of "trying", Diana recalled a series of opportunities to participate in school events and she expressed pride that although each occasion had been uncertain for her, she had accepted the challenge. She recognized that in this way she was different from her classmates who had been unwilling to try. She concluded: "I would try to do my best, and I would do my best. And that was an accomplishment for me."

The value Diana attached to doing her best was shared by all of the women. For some of them, the effort was important regardless of the outcome. Irini explained that the process of "trying hard" was a success for her even when she was experiencing what some people would call a "bad race": "Even if I've had bad thoughts the whole time, as long as I've been trying to conquer them, or ignore them, or whatever, instead of indulging them, then I can say at the end, 'I'm happy'".

Athena described this aspect of success as a "quality of striving to overcome, and to perfect" and Gaea referred to it as being "goal driven". They felt a kinship with others who were striving, or who had an "inner urge" to be better and it didn't matter whether the striving was in the area of ultrarunning, or even sports. Irini's description of someone whom she would find inspiring exemplified the respect the ultrawomen accorded those who have an "inner urge":

> I don't really think of people, whether they're successful or not. But I know that what I really like in a person, or what I'm drawn to, or what feeds me, is someone who's just trying to be a better person, or better situations, or whatever. ... I'm not really inspired by people who don't have any inner urge.

For some of the ultrawomen, this aspect of success was manifested in a moment-to-moment awareness of one's goals. Marina recounted a story of her experience running an ultra with Irini that epitomized these women's commitment to living consciously in accord with their goals. Irini was entered in a 1300-mile race and Marina was in the 700-mile race occurring concurrently, and consequently they were able to run together. Although the race lasted for more than two weeks, Marina noted that Irini was "dealing in seconds" right from the beginning of the race. At one point during the race, before a sleep break after which they had agreed to resume running together, Marina recalled the following exchange with Irini:

> And then she said, 'Ok, meet you out on the road at 3:00 a.m.' I said, 'Ok, I'll meet you at the tent at 3:00 a.m.' She said, 'No.' Her tent was like ten feet from the road. I'm not exaggerating. She says, 'No. We're on the road at 3:00 a.m. You get to my tent, five to three.' So I got myself up, like quarter to three, so I could be -- I only had to walk like 60 meters to her place, but there's no way I was gonna be late! Right? And we were on the road.

The ability, illustrated by Marina's story of Irini, to live each moment of each day with an awareness of long-term goals was admired by the ultrawomen. Living consciously included a commitment to using every moment to its fullest. Even in the context of a multi-day event, every moment counted.

Expecting obstacles. In depicting success as living consciously, the ultrawomen also displayed an attitude of appreciation for the obstacles that arise in a person's life. For these women, success meant the process of struggling to overcome obstacles, as much as any outcome which might be produced. This belief is illustrated by a story Gaea recounted about the time she became lost on a poorly marked ultra course and knew that, after months of preparation, she had missed all chance to achieve the performance goals she had aspired to that day. Despite her intense feelings of disappointment and frustration, she stayed to complete the ultrarun rather than giving in and dropping out of the race, "'Cause that would have been too easy!" She admired people who struggled to overcome personal limitations, and she felt she had succeeded that day by overcoming some painful emotions and staying in the race.

Kara also communicated the importance of facing obstacles in her definition of success: "The people that I know, who I feel are successful, ... are people who've gone through a very difficult period of time in their life, and have come through it a better person because of that." As she spoke about her own goals she expected that some struggle would be involved, and she concluded: "If it was easy, it wouldn't be worth it." Athena summarized this aspect of success in this process-oriented definition of success: "Success is what I, personally have learned in the experience, and the work, and the pain, and the struggle that's involved."

Juno's image of a successful person, was also of someone who "would just keep struggling" and "would never give up." The woman Juno recalled who fit this image "had so much to be negative about, she could'a just said, 'The hell with it.' ... When she could've gone under, so to speak, here she made something negative turn into a positive approach." Although this

woman was unsuccessful in conventional terms such as finances or career, she was a success to Juno because of her courage in the face of daunting obstacles.

In short, for the ultrawomen, obstacles were not a subject of dread or even resignation. They were simply a part of the process. As Athena summarized it, in an ultradistance race, or in her life, to be successful is to be clear about one's goals, and be prepared to struggle in the process of striving toward those goals:

> To me, an ultradistance race is a microcosm of what real life is. And it goes back to my definition of success which implies a lot of work, a lot of pain, and a lot of struggle. So that's the way it is. Real life is harder, because the goal is not that clearly defined for a lot of people. And my goal is death. ... I want to be responsible. I want to be able to answer to my actions at the moment of death.

Surpassing limits. Success as striving meant living consciously, which also included surpassing limits. The stories that the ultrawomen told about their development as athletes were characterized by a tendency to always want to go further. For these women, success was a process of pushing back barriers, in their sporting performance and their personal lives, as well as in their response to gender biases and human limitations.

The story of Juno's athletic beginnings provides an example which typifies the ultrawomen's desire to challenge personal and gender barriers. Juno's running career began when she was watching her teen-age sons in a race in which there were three women entered. Juno made a pact with herself that the next year she would be one of the women in the race. Before the year was over, she had entered her first 10k. Although she recalled being "scared skinny going into it" she won the over-35 division of that race and looked for bigger challenges. She entered a marathon, and

lacking the confidence that she could finish that, she ran another marathon the previous week just to reassure herself. Then Juno "started to see how many (she) could do," and in the course of running a record number of marathons, she discovered a longer challenge -- the ultramarathon.

Like Juno's story, each woman's story of her discovery of the ultramarathon was unique. But the desire to surpass limits was common to them all. Ultrarunning was one way the women worked individually and collectively to surpass limits. Lucine felt that ultrarunners had barely begun to discover what was humanly possible and she was intense in her desire to see what more could be accomplished. "We have so far to go with it. It's just virgin territory. We've got to work together! ... and be supportive of each other, and bring something extra out of each other! ... Just think what we can do with it!" Holda saw the importance of working together to transform and to transcend as being particularly evident in longer ultras:

> It's like the whole thing about illumination, like of the negative qualities, not to get rid of the quality, but to transform it. And, the atmosphere at the races is very, very positive. Well, I'm thinking now of the very long races, like the 1000-Mile and the 1300: almost miraculous! And everyone who's participating in these races is transcending incredible inner boundaries. And I just feel that the mutual help that people give each other subtly, like not even obviously or outwardly, is incredible. I feel that what happens is really special, especially in the long races.

The ultrawomen's inclination to always go further was manifested in other areas of their lives as well. For some of the women, the importance of surpassing limits was something that they felt not only for

themselves, but on behalf of other women as well. For these women, gender barriers were particularly odious. According to Freya:

> I hate to think of gender restrictions. I don't think like, 'Oh well, here I am a woman, I can or can't do this.' I think, 'Well, gee, of course I can. I'll just do it in my own way.'

The experience of surpassing what they had been told were gender barriers or had previously believed their personal limits to be, was a profound experience for the ultrawomen. Having expanded their sense of personal limits through ultrarunning, the women recognized the potential of ultrarunning as a means to further personal and spiritual growth. Expressing its importance to her, Irini talked about how grateful she was for the opportunity to run because it was through running that she could develop in spiritual ways. Following her first 1300-Mile run, Irini explained her longing to run the longest of the ultras again the following year:

> I feel like I'm dying to have it again. If I didn't get to do it every year, I'd be sad. Because I feel there's so just so much farther I can go, not necessarily in outer distance, but just in perfecting the attitude, -- my own consciousness.

Having achieved physical feats of endurance that many people would consider impossible, the ultrawomen began to see their minds as perhaps one of their few limitations. According to Marina: "Lots of times, even our mind stands in our way. 'Cause we have already prejudged something. So, ... by always trying something beyond ourselves, you find that you break down barriers, and that you do have a lot more capacity." Rather than allowing their minds to be a limiting factor, they began to see the power of their belief in their own ability. As Kara put it, "The more I have done, the more I think I am capable of doing." After completing what

has been called "the premier individual endurance event of the world" (Edwards, 1983, p. 16), the Ironman triathlon involving a 2.4-mile ocean swim followed by a 112-mile bike ride and finishing with a 26.2-mile run in the heat of the Hawaiian lava fields, Kara recalled thinking: "Boy, there's nothing I can't do. Absolutely nothing."

The discovery that they could go beyond the limits they had previously believed in led some of the women to question completely the very concept of human limitations. When I asked Chandra and Marina about limits, they both wondered, "Where are the limits?" Chandra concluded: "Maybe there aren't any limits! .. I don't know! I certainly wouldn't have thought I could run a hundred kilometers. I mean, that is just a very, very huge thing. But if you can do that, ... what are the limits?" Expressing a sentiment common to the ultrawomen, Diana explained that, through ultrarunning, she has come to believe that "there's no limit! This allows me to do anything!"

In summary, the ultrawomen's process-oriented definition of success as striving, related to the quality of one's experience rather than the outcome. The ultrawomen felt that events, which by product standards such as time or distance, might appear to have been failures, would have actually been successes if they had consciously tried throughout to do their best. They anticipated that the process of striving for their goals would involve struggle, and require them to surmount obstacles. Finally, they also defined this aspect of success as surpassing limits. For them, success was a matter of surpassing both individual and human limitations.

Success and Personal Achievement

Personal achievement was a second major theme in the ultrawomen's definition of success. The ultrawomen valued, with some hesitation, product-oriented definitions of success in terms of public recognition. Although they were wary of the consequences of this recognition, they recognized it could be of value in certain contexts. Ultimately, however, they espoused a process-oriented outlook on success that was based on internal rather than external measures, and meant that the experience of doing something well was its own reward. From this position, they emphasized inner recognition, flexibility and integrity.

Public Recognition

The ultrawomen's product-oriented definition of success in terms of personal achievement focused on public recognition, which included both the larger public of locality or country and the more intimate public of other runners, family and friends. National or even local acclaim for ultrarunners is unusual and this form of public recognition was not accorded many of the ultrawomen interviewed. Acknowledgment from a family and friends was more common in the lives of the ultrawomen. In varying levels the ultrawomen were wary of both forms of public recognition.

Gaea's reputation was established in her days of running shorter events which were popular and publicized, and she is accustomed to public recognition on both a local and national level. Her experience with public recognition is rare among women ultrarunners who are involved in a sport which is largely unrecognized. Most of the ultrawomen reflected on the

ways people are unaware of or antagonistic about ultrarunning, and they did not expect support from the general public.

Lucine, for example, in spite of having achieved a world-class status, did not believe that her accomplishments as an ultrarunner had often brought her appreciation or acclaim. More often it had meant rejection and misunderstanding. This was painful to Lucine, who continued to seek recognition for herself and her sport. From a personal perspective she said, "I need publicity for sponsorship. I need publicity so that the rest of the world around me becomes more tolerant of my needing time to do this. -- Or the fact that I don't do other things because I do this." For the advancement of ultrarunning, Lucine felt public recognition was also important: "And it's important to unite those of us who are out there trying, and to work together. So you need publicity in that regard."

Although the circumstances were quite different, Chandra also recalled a time when public recognition was very important to her. Although this has since changed, Chandra, like Lucine, once felt a need for recognition in response to a keenly felt marginalization:

> It used to be crucially important to me that people recognize what I do. That was in a period when people didn't really appear to me to be recognizing what I was doing. I was very sensitive to being discounted or marginalized. ... And I demanded to be recognized.

Other than Gaea, Lucine, and Chandra, the ultrawomen did not speak about having or desiring this level of public recognition. Because ultrarunning has not generally attracted media or public attention, some of the ultrawomen have not had the same options for public recognition as the above mentioned three women, and so this has never been an issue for them. Others who have had these options have hesitations. Freya was wary of public recognition because she wanted to be true to her own

definition of success: "Please don't always applaud. Because then I have to go one step further, and I don't want you dictating what that step will be. I want to be in control of it." Athena avoided recognition for a different reason. She said that she has learned not to mention to people that she has run across Canada because "it can sometimes get in the way of you really communicating with another person."

Evan had a similar reason for being suspicious of recognition. She recounted a story in which she was asked after an ultra how far she had run. When she answered the two men who had inquired, they were disheartened that a person they perceived to be younger than them, and a woman, had run twice as far as they had. Evan was "hurt that they lessened their achievement by what [she] did, -- by making a comparison and judging." She expressed appreciation for everyone's accomplishments in an ultrarun and preferred to define success on her own terms, rather than by comparison with others.

Holda and Marina shared this perspective on recognition and focused more on their effect on others than on the meaning of recognition for them personally. Each of them asserted that it was unimportant to them for people to be impressed by them, but that it was meaningful to them when others were inspired by their accomplishments. Evan carried this focus into her body work profession where she wanted to work in such a way that she would be "invisible." From her perspective, it would be "wonderful" if, instead of someone leaving her office crediting Evan with the changes in themselves, they would be leaving saying, "'I transformed myself.' "

Although the ultrawomen did not expect acclaim from the general public, they were accustomed to receiving support from other ultrarunners

and from a few people close to them. Athena explained that recognition from other runners is particularly meaningful to her: "And it's sort of like, simple acceptance, and an inner connection. That can mean far more to me than the ... usual paraphernalia, and the way that success is defined." Freya also spoke of the importance of recognition from those closest to her. For her, recognition from this "very, very small, small group" was important to her sense of self. She asserted that self-image was not "something that you acquire and it's a complete package." Rather, self-image must be nurtured: "And you can certainly get a lot of that nurturance from within. But we need feedback from those around us."

Some ultrawomen, while acknowledging the importance of recognition, were quick to suggest that it was not essential. With personal, as with public recognition, the ultrawomen's comments reflected a wariness toward recognition and an awareness of the potential loss of freedom which could result from a dependence on others' recognition. Using terms identical to those used by other ultrawomen, Athena talked about external recognition as being "nice, but not necessary." For Athena, even though it was "sometimes painful not to have that outer confirmation of what you do," it was possible and even desirable if it meant following her own beliefs.

In summary, the ultrawomen's standpoint on success as personal achievement from a product-orientation revolved around public recognition. Public recognition was accepted by some of them who considered it to be valuable to their sport because it increased its visibility and because through public awareness others might be inspired. Apart from the desire to inspire others, the ultrawomen considered recognition from those close to them to be more personally important than

acclaim from a larger public. At the same time, these women expressed reservations about the ways that public recognition could be harmful to them.

Inner Recognition

While the ultrawomen had some reservations about product-oriented definitions of success in terms of public recognition, they were unequivocal in their belief in defining success in personal, process-oriented terms. "Success", said Brigid, "is being happy within yourself." Clearly rejecting the measure of success according to public recognition, Juno elucidated the importance of inner recognition, saying that success "has nothing to do with title or prestige. It's how a person feels about himself and how he treats other people." Using the language of running, Athena explained how she raced, and how she believed in living her life: "Go by your own pace and your own rhythm." Her statement reflects the process-oriented aspect of success voiced by the ultrawomen which is based on inner rather than outer recognition. From this perspective, success cannot be measured in a race by the time clock, or in life by publicly recognized terms such as position or status, because only the individual knows how she performed in an inner sense.

Marina outlined this difference between success on her own terms and what might be externally interpreted as success: "If I do something and it, maybe in the outer world, it looks like it's not successful, but in the inner I'm satisfied, I'm happy, I feel completed, then to me that's success." Emphasizing the difference between what might be applauded by others, and what they experienced themselves, the ultrawomen claimed that inner recognition was more important to them. Although several women

acknowledged that they had not always known this, currently they all expressed the belief that "the acknowledgment needs to come from within."

This seemed especially true for Athena who pronounced a steadfast reliance on her own inner knowing: "True success has to be an inner recognition of some form of fulfillment. ... For me anyway, it's not outer recognition." She was firm in her belief that external recognition is unnecessary and that true success is one's own experience of living in accord with one's ultimate purpose: "You don't need a medal. You don't need the trophy. You don't need your big paycheck at the end. ... If you're doing what you believe is purposeful in life, ... that's sufficient in itself."

The ultrawomen's emphasis on inner recognition is central to their definition of success as a process. If success is a process, and if the process itself is meaningful, then one is not living for a reward at the end but rather for the experience itself. Athena's comments above and Evan's below illustrate how the process can be so meaningful that recognition becomes unimportant:

> But with the last two races, I was on such a high with my running and how I was with the environment, I didn't need any acknowledgment. I got it from how I ran, and I got it from my environment.

Flexibility. One key aspect of the ultrawomen's outlook on success as inner recognition was "flexibility". This quality referred to the ability to be flexible and self-affirming. Freya affirmed her own ability to be flexible saying, "I have a very good practiced habit of being able to lower my expectations, and live with that difference". And then she laughed and

concluded, "But I don't often allow myself to compensate, because I reach my first goal!"

Other ultrawomen shared with Freya the expectation that their goals would be reached and the acceptance of flexibility in reaching for those goals. While the goal may be considered the product, it was the process of how they reached that goal that the women emphasized. They talked about the importance of structuring goals to insure success and about the ways in which they support themselves. For some of the women, learning how to do this has been one of the most important lessons they have learned.

Kara described an experience, during a 50-mile trail run, which taught her the importance of learning to support herself: "All I could do was keep repeating to myself that I couldn't do this, one -- more -- time. And I started to cry. ... And I was just sobbing and sobbing and sobbing." Dispirited and in tears, Kara was met by race volunteers who encouraged her to leave the race. Although she agreed to drop out, in retrospect she was not happy with herself: "When I came home that evening, I was not understanding of myself. I basically tore strips off myself." Because of her lack of self support during and after that race, and because she had not learned ways to be flexible and adjust her expectations to fit the conditions of the event, Kara was forced to drop out of the race and then experienced the painful aftermath of that decision. But this was a learning experience, and since that event, Kara has learned how to talk to herself in ways that help her to stay in the race and to stay positive. As she saw it, the development of these skills was essential to her continuing ability to accept the challenge of ultrarunning:

> You have to support and encourage yourself, or you wouldn't do it. (Sigh.) I think more, when I'm running than I do at any other time. And

> I think of me, and my emotional well-being. ... I never used to think that way. I look after myself more than I ever did.

If there is an exception to the pattern of flexibility and self-support described above, Lucine exemplifies it. She assured me that when she doesn't meet her expectations, she is indeed quite hard on herself. For Lucine, neither pain, nor fatigue, nor injury were reasons to leave a race or do any less than one's best. She stated her belief categorically: "When you have a choice of doing it or not doing it, and you don't do it, that's unforgivable. So why are you there?"

When defining success in personal terms, the ultrawomen talked about inner recognition and, with the exception of Lucine, they talked about flexibility. Flexibility referred to the process of self-support, and not to any capriciousness of character.

Integrity. Another key aspect of the ultrawomen's process-oriented definition of success as inner recognition was "integrity". Chandra described this aspect of success as being able to keep all aspects of her life "consistent" with who she is. In terms of sense of self, Chandra's definitions of success and giftedness were the same. When thinking, feeling, and behaving are all integrated, "so that everything fits in" and "there's no flying off", that's integrity, and that's both a gift we receive and one which must be developed. She particularly talked about the development of this gift as representing success when she discussed the relationship between personal and professional success. For Chandra, success meant the ability "to maintain personal integrity ... to reference from yourself" making sure that the personal and the professional all "fit" and are "personally consistent."

Holda's definition of success included integration in somewhat different terms. According to her, an individual must comes to terms with personal qualities which are "helpful" and "maybe not so helpful". For Holda, integrity meant the honest coming to terms with both the liked and disliked aspects of one's personality which she believed was necessary to personal development and spiritual progress. Irini described success in similar terms. For her, this meant being "more with my soul every day. When I don't do the things I don't want to do, or don't say bad things that I don't really mean. That'll be my success, and I'll be happier, and I'll be more peaceful." Also distinguishing personal achievement in the process-oriented terms of internal peace, Juno concluded that success was demonstrated by a person's having "a certain peace of mind."

Evan emphasized the integration of herself and her surroundings. Personal achievement in her process-oriented terms was being in tune with herself and her surroundings, regardless of what was happening: "Just experiencing the moment, and being present all the time ..... And not having the expectation that it has to be good all the time. Just anything that happens -- to experience it fully." She summarized her definition of success saying that success meant being "fully present" and "fully aware," and "just being open. Success to me is just having an open heart."

Using different words, Holda also talked about being fully present in her definition of success. For her, when someone is fully present, they are "being part of the flow" and they are in touch "with this beautiful thing. And, and that beauty in itself is joy... the joy is the success." For her, integrity and harmony were connected, and someone who experienced what her teacher, Sri Chinmoy, called "an undivided mind" was experiencing both

and was experiencing joy. Holda was careful to explain to me that the success wasn't in the doing of something but the experiencing of this joy.

After sharing her process-oriented definition of success, Holda concluded: "That's success, and I'm sure I don't define success in the usual way that people in society define it." Thinking about the conventional meaning of success, she laughed and added, "And I'm sure not interested in that word 'success'." In this way, Holda phrased the sentiment, common among the ultrawomen, that familiar definitions of success based on salary or prestige, were not for them.

In summary, the ultrawomen portrayed success as personal achievement from a process-orientation in terms of inner recognition. In contrast to their qualified acceptance of public recognition, the ultrawomen indicated unqualified belief in inner recognition. This aspect of success included the ability to be flexible and self-affirming. It also encompassed "integrity" which meant living in harmony with all of oneself and being fully present in each moment.

Success and Relationships with Others

The third, and final theme in the ultrawomen's definitions of success concerned relationships with others. The ultrawomen did not espouse a product-oriented definition of success in terms of personal relationships. However, many of their critical comments concerning competition focused on the interpersonal implications of competition, particularly the damage it could do to relationships, and the ways it could lead to isolation.

Consequently, the ultrawomen's feelings about competition and personal relationships will be presented here.

With the exception of their comments about the interpersonal consequences of competition, the ultrawomen's definition of success in terms of relationships with others was process-oriented. Success meant maintaining good relationships and being a part of, and contributing to, their community. As in previous sections, the product-orientation will be presented first, followed by the process-orientation.

Interpersonal Implications of Competition

Members of a competitive culture, and participants in a sport that could be approached in this way, the ultrawomen accepted some level of competition. At the same time, many of the ultrawomen disclosed concern about the ways that they felt competition was damaging personally and interpersonally. They felt that it engendered feelings of resentment or anger among people and these were feelings they did not wish to foster in themselves or others. They resolved the conflict between their traditional training in competitive approaches to success and their discomfort with its implications by maintaining what Holda described as, the "fine line":

> There's nothing wrong with doing your best or wanting to do better. But there's a fine line between (wanting to do your best, and) going to a certain edge, where you lose a sense of your own self, and all you really want is to beat somebody. And at that time, you can easily lose touch with your own energy. Now, for someone who, doesn't care about what they're doing from the inner point of view, that might be fine. ... But for me, the whole value of it is, the meditation of concentrating, on yourself, like, for a long period of time, and, all the experiences you have.

With these comments, Holda expresses the importance of the process of "doing your best", of "meditation" and "concentrating", and of "all the experiences you have" and she contrasts this with the products of "beating somebody" which could lead to a loss of connection with one's self and ultimately, a loss of the "whole value" of ultrarunning. Although the ultrawomen drew the line in different ways, they each asserted that their intention was primarily to do their best. They did not want to go beyond that line to the competitive perspective where they lost touch with themselves or where they discouraged other ultrawomen.

Freya articulated the concerns many of the women interviewed had about the negative consequences of a competitive focus. She acknowledged her occasional impulse to strive for outcome-oriented or competitive goals while she also recognized the interpersonal consequences of such an approach: "I still can fall prey to those time-clock expectations, and I can still get sucked in at times, inappropriately. And I can wish ill on someone ahead of me." These were not feelings she wished to nurture in herself because she did not like the implications for interpersonal relationships. As she further explained:

> I do believe that competition means that you have to wish that someone else does poorly. For you to be successful [in the competitive terms of mutually exclusive goal attainment], either you've got to be ahead of them, and be very strong in what you're after, or they've got to fail!

Diana explained that for her, competitiveness was "not a good feeling" because "it almost feels like if I'm trying to compete with this person, I have something against them, or like we're enemies for a certain period of time." She found that by focusing on doing her best, she could run well and maintain her supportive feelings about the other runners at the same time. Athena felt that she was able to go further than people who were "only out

for themselves" because she is able to "empathize" with the other runners: "I've gone further by sharing and caring for the other runners".

Reflecting on the value of connection and the pain of isolation, Chandra contrasted her experience running ultras with another sport. She found ultrarunners, particularly ultrawomen, to be "tremendously supportive". However, in canoe racing, where she was often the only female entrant, she experienced an adversarial attitude which she found "very difficult" to endure: "They're very competitive, and very nasty. They won't talk. They won't make eye contact. They ignore you like you don't exist."

The isolation that Chandra described above was not something to which the ultrawomen wanted to subject others or themselves. Just as Chandra contrasted her experience in canoe racing with that in ultrarunning, other women noted a similar distinction about ultrarunning. Throughout their comments on competition, there was a consistency that ultrarunning was different from other sports in its lack of emphasis on competition, and this was a difference that contributed to its appeal. According to Brigid, "People are not competitive in ultras as they are in other races. There's more of a spirit for one another." This sense was shared by all of the women, even those who embraced competition. For example, Lucine recalled a time when she felt another woman had been purposely discouraging to her in order to gain a competitive advantage. This behavior was most odious to Lucine who contrasted it with the pride she and the other ultrawomen felt about ultrarunning's non-competitive spirit: "That goes contrary to what I call the purity of the whole thing. I think it detracts greatly from the race."

Competition is, by the definition used here, based on "mutually exclusive goal attainment" (Kohn, 1986, p. 4), and the discussion above centers around this definition. However, within the context of their ultrarunning, the ultrawomen did talk about competition in other terms. For example, Diana used the term competition in the following, decidedly non-competitive terms: "This is the kind of competitiveness that I like, where everyone helps each other but just tries to do their best."

The prevailing sentiment was that there was a kind of competition, within ultrarunning, in which affiliation enhanced rather than conflicted with achievement. From Lucine's perspective, "the purity of ultrarunning" required her to strive to do her best, and to wish the same of other runners. She summarized this combination of achievement and affiliation with the following comment: "Unless I die, they're gonna have one heck of a time getting by me! I'm gonna give a 101% and the girl who goes by me is the first hand I'd shake!"

Some of the women felt that their best performances occurred when they were challenged by other runners. Marina was one of the women who particularly liked being entered in an event with someone who was capable of challenging her. She saw these situations as opportunities to extend her limits. She viewed races as not being about "the competition aspect" but rather as being occasions to bring "out the best in yourself". She explained that she has had "some of the nicest experiences because [she's] had to work really hard because someone's challenging [her] or [she's] challenging them." Recognizing that particularly in shorter races, but in the ultra as well, some runners have a more negative attitude about those who challenge them, Marina asserted that her attitude of

appreciation is more suited to ultradistance running: "In the ultra, it is the only attitude, 'cause it's too much otherwise."

Sometimes challenge and support occurred in a personal way between two runners during an event, and at other times this was a matter of hearing that a new national or international record had been set for a particular distance. Both types of challenge and support were important to the ultrawomen because they proved the human potential to run further or faster. Without this living proof, ultrawomen would be alone with the conventional beliefs that suggest that the distances the ultrawomen run are next to impossible. The comparisons the ultrawomen made were not about their accomplishments versus someone else's, as much as being about their new view of what was possible versus their old view. Lucine summarized this perspective:

> By working together, we see what other ones are doing, then that just inspires us to go further and further. And we have to work together as a team, 'cause we have no idea how far we can carry this, or what we can do with it.

In summary, the ultrawomen voiced concerns about the implications of a product-orientation in terms of relationships with others. Although they accepted the element of structural competition in ultrarunning, they were wary of intentional competition because of its potential for damaging interpersonal relationships. They resolved this issue by maintaining the "fine line" of focusing on their own personal best, and by seeing other ultrarunners as sharing the similar goal of advancing the sport of ultrarunning. From this perspective, seeing someone ahead of them in a race, or hearing that someone else had set a new record, allowed them to see new possibilities and inspired them. In this way, competition

was not about their individual accomplishments versus someone else's, but rather about their collective past accomplishments versus their collective future potentials.

Community

In contrast with the isolation that might result from product-oriented competitive approaches, and consistent with their redefinition of competition in collective terms, the ultrawomen outlined process-oriented approaches to success in terms of relationships with others and being supported by and supporting one's community. Success from this perspective was based on mutual rather than exclusive benefit. Athena's explanation of this aspect of success is a good summary of the position shared by the women interviewed: "I think that our humanity implies caring for others, and having empathy for others. In fact, to me, that's a definition of greatness -- to be able to move forward and accomplish things, but not at the expense of others."

I was struck by how quickly some of the ultrawomen responded about their relationships when I asked them about success. The quality of their personal relationships was evidently an essential part of their definition of success. When I mentioned this to Brigid, she seemed quite puzzled and replied: "But isn't that more important?"

The ultrawomen also revealed the importance of community in their emphasis on helping others. Lucine's account of someone she considered to be the "epitome of success" provides a summary of this aspect of the ultrawomen's definition of success: "Because he gives so much, and he helps so many, and he works so hard! ... And he's also accomplished in so many avenues. But, but he gives himself."

Some of the women saw helping others as a way to pass on what they had learned. This belief was most strongly proposed by Gaea, Athena, and Freya. Gaea's early running experience, had been strictly product-oriented, and Gaea described the consequences of this orientation as being sometimes quite personally painful. Consequently, Gaea felt strongly about passing on some of the process-orientation she has learned to young people whom she hopes will have a better start than she had: "I think it's really important to me ... now that I've figured out why I'm doing it, to try to help."

Kara also was intent on passing on to others what she has learned. She saw no conflict between her personal striving and her support of other runners. She articulated the sense that resources are shared, and that what one gives away, comes back in some way:

> If I'm willing to share it with another person, I'm sure at some point, something will come back to me that they have found or learned, or that they can share back. If not, that will come from someone else. I've never felt that I've lost from any experience like that, ever.

From Athena's perspective, "such is the way of life. You receive all of this, and then you pass it on." For her, this was a "Shaman type mentality. You know, passing on the lineage from one generation to the next. This is, I think, the essence of success." Freya spoke of this in different terms as she too sought a way to express the importance of bringing all of the richness of one's life to what you pass on to the next generation: "Success means ... making a contribution in every part -- physical, emotional, spiritual -- leaving something behind!"

The ultrawomen also equated success with relationships in the way that they valued this aspect of the ultrarunning community. Some of the women who have more recently begun ultrarunning recalled how they were

struck by the difference they had felt between their previous experiences of isolation in competition and the sense of community when they ran their first ultras. Evan described her first 24-hour race as a "very moving experience". For her, it was as though "we were all on the same journey. ... So, it's that kind of just, being with oneself, but you were one with everybody else that was running." Gaea also recalled one of her first ultras, a 50-miler, during which she was struck by the feeling of community among the ultrarunners:

> The people, they're so different because they say nice things to you when you pass them. ... You just talk about where you're from and how you're doing, and just all sorts of things that come up. And it's so different. ... And everyone says something. Like even if you're feeling not so good, you still say, "Way to go!" And, "That's good! You're looking good. You're almost at an aid station." ... And you don't do that in the shorter races.

Throughout their interviews, the ultrawomen referred often to the feeling they had with other ultrarunners, most frequently using the terms, "family" and "community". Evan's explanation of the term "family" was repeated by many of the women: "There's a family there. There's a unity. I know people within the race, so there's a joy there. There's a sharing whenever I see those people." Lucine, like many of the women, used the term "community" and she explained how one earns membership in the ultrarunning community and what that membership meant to her:

> I think of us as community. ... Those who are there because they genuinely have put in the work, and are striving to do what we're all striving to do, then they all warrant respect. And we all deserve help from each other, and support. And it's a group effort in many ways, 'cause we're doing something very important.

The women's descriptions of this community demonstrate the ways that a process orientation is supported. While, as stated earlier, the

ultrawomen may have some product goals, such as time or distance, they are supported during the ultrarun for their participation rather than for their place or rank at the finish line. Freya summarized the importance of this aspect of the ultrarunning community:

> There's a lot of nurturance in positive relationships, and a lot of acceptance. So if you are stumbling along, and you're quite below your normal pace, and you aren't going to have the normal success of making a particular time on a fifty-miler, there's not rejection. You know, this is not seen as failure. So that's very significant in terms of how you view yourself during that event, and afterward! There's strokes!

Seeking to explain the strong sense of community, the women often talked about the honesty of what is shared during an ultra. The women explained that because they were surpassing personal limits during each event and there was little energy left over for pretense. Holda described the community enhancing effect of this experience: "Because when you're doing a race like this, something very real comes out in everyone. ... And when that is coming out, it is a universal thing. And so people can really identify with each other, and share with each other." Although those relationships might develop into friendships outside of the ultra event, their value is not based on the length of time shared but rather on the quality of what was experienced. As Kara explained, the significance of the relationships which occurred during an ultra was based on the honesty and caring that occurred during an ultra:

> ....just in that short time, there's a specialness that passes... whether you see that person again or not. You just know for that short period of time, you really were meaningful to each other. And it's something that I don't experience anywhere else. Not with the same, I guess, honesty about it. See, you're really at your, all worst, or all best out there. And I mean you're really open. You just can't be phony, or put on, when you're out struggling and working really hard. -- Just to

> connect with somebody else who's going through the same thing. I guess it's the honesty, the caring -- They obviously care or they wouldn't do it, as one human being to another.

According to the women interviewed, the sense of community in ultraruns enables them to do more than they would be capable of doing individually. They gave many examples of instances where they had been able to accomplish more by working together and spoke clearly about their experience of ultra events as being occasions where the collective energy made possible the surpassing of otherwise insurmountable individual limits. In some of the stories the ultrawomen shared, the mutual support meant two runners had remarkably better times. Evan recounted such an experience which occurred during a 50-miler. She had been "slowing down, and slowing down, ... 'playing hopscotch' with these three people" when another runner began running with her. Running together made a powerful difference to Evan that day, and she was laughing as she recalled what happened:

> All of a sudden we had done 10, 15 miles in half the time that I had done 8. So we were just whipping by people and I was almost dizzy. I thought, "Wow, I'm running this!" And the crew was really pleased, because they thought I'd come in around 14 or 15 hours, but I came in at 12:59.

Athena described situations similar to Evan's. She remembered getting through "very bad patches in some races" by chatting with other runners, "particularly other women, helping others along." She explained that in an ultra, "You've got to look after your own head, your own skin, but you look out for your team, well, not team, but the other runners too." Athena

found it difficult to find the word to describe those people who were neither her "competitors" nor her "teammates". They were people with whom she was bonding together in order to challenge human boundaries.

Summary

Success was defined with product and process-oriented perspectives according to three themes: striving, personal achievement, and relationships with others. Striving, from a product perspective, meant competition and outcome orientation. Some of the ultrawomen valued competitive measures of success such as ranking and records, and all of them acknowledged outcome-oriented measures such as race times and race distances. At the same time, there was a wariness about these measures, and a conviction that they could not be the only way success was defined. No one expounded a belief in competition as the first or most important measure of success.

Striving, from a process-oriented perspective, meant living consciously which included expecting obstacles and surpassing limits. Success meant having the desire always to go further, to go beyond what could easily be done, or what was commonly done, and to be all that they could be. It was important to reach the furthest limit they could envision, and having reached it, to envision and strive for something more.

Personal achievement, from a product-oriented perspective, was measured by public recognition. However, because the ultrawomen believed that success must be defined on their own terms and was not something that anyone else could measure externally, they felt that public acknowledgment was of limited value to them. Recognition from those

nearest them was meaningful, but ultimately the recognition that counted most had to come from themselves.

When personal achievement was considered in process-oriented terms, the ultrawomen focused on how one lived rather than on what one accomplished. Inner recognition, which encompassed flexibility and integrity, was central to their definition of success in terms of personal achievement. Inner recognition meant living in accord with what one believed; flexibility meant living in accord with one's capacity in the moment; and integrity meant living in accord with all aspects of one's inner and outer environment.

With regard to relationships with others, the ultrawomen did not propose any product-oriented definitions of success. Instead, they expressed concerns about the interpersonal consequences of product-oriented competitive approaches to success. They believed that an emphasis on competition could lead to animosity between people and contribute to personal feelings of isolation. Success in terms of relationships with others was defined primarily from a process-oriented point of view. From this perspective, maintaining good relationships and contributing to one's community were considered to be important aspects of success.

The ultrawomen's definitions of success were primarily non-competitive and focused more on process than on product. Their definitions were based more on internal than on external measures of success. These findings are summarized in Figures 4a, 4b, and 4c below.

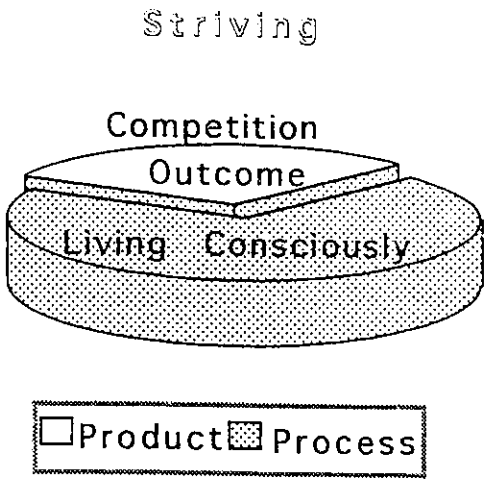

Figure 4a. Summary of ultrawomen's definitions of success as striving.

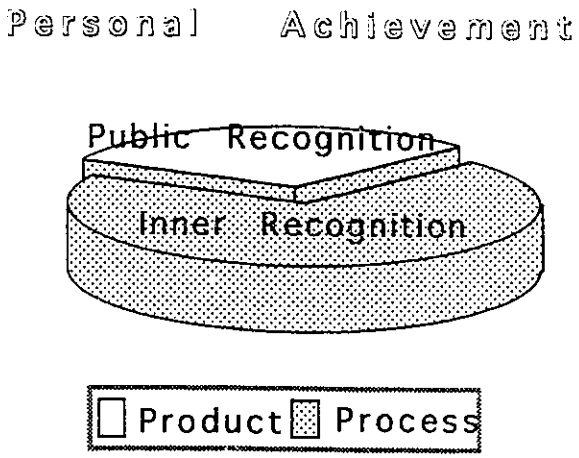

Figure 4b. Summary of ultrawomen's definitions of success as personal achievement.

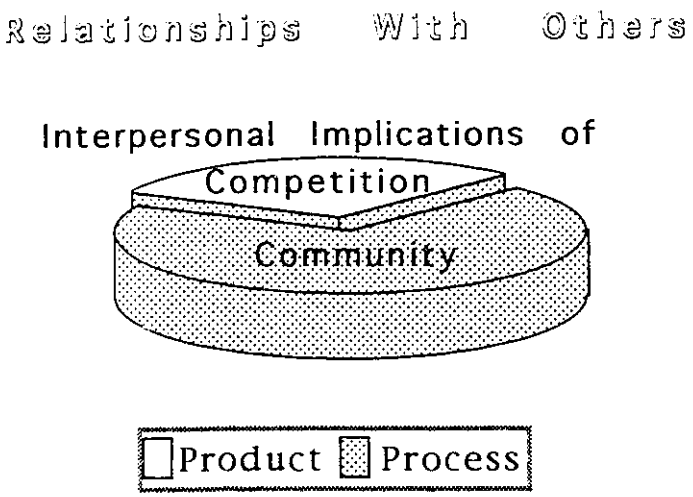

Figure 4c. Summary of ultrawomen's definitions of success as relationships with others.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Results indicate that women ultrarunners' definitions of giftedness and success are consistent with the research literature in some ways. In particular, their product-oriented definitions of giftedness and success fit with accepted definitions of these terms. However, the ultrawomen have also proposed alternative ways of conceiving of giftedness and success from a process-oriented perspective.

In this chapter, these and other comparisons and contrasts between the literature on giftedness and success and the results of the present study will be explored. Two differences between this and the previous chapter will briefly be noted before continuing. First, the previous chapter dealt exclusively with the findings of the present study so that the reader could view the meanings of giftedness and success I have drawn my interviews with the ultrawomen. In this chapter, the literature on giftedness and success will be reintroduced so that the reader can see the ultrawomen's perspectives in this larger research context.

When viewing the findings of this study in this larger context, it may be helpful to recall the specific nature of the present study. This is a feminist study of a small group of Canadian women who engage in a mental and physical pursuit which is unusual in Canada. Further, almost half of the women in this study expressed profound spiritual convictions. These two factors, which are addressed at greater length in the section on "Limitations" in the following chapter, might prepare the reader to anticipate that the findings of the present study would be unique in some ways. What may be surprising is the ways in which these findings are often consistent with previous findings regarding other gifted women.

A second difference between this chapter and the previous one concerns the presentation of the discussion of giftedness and success. In the previous chapter, the ultrawomen's comments concerning giftedness and success were presented separately, as they usually occurred in the interviews. That presentation, while preserving the distinctions between them, may have obscured the connections. These connections are present in different forms in both the research literature and in the ultrawomen's comments.

As it has been studied, success is the fulfillment of the promise of giftedness. Success, measured in terms of eminence or outstanding achievement in a particular field, has been believed to be the fruition of giftedness as identified by intellect and other special abilities. This equation is less fitting when giftedness is defined in terms of personal qualities such as compassion and transformation. The relationship between giftedness and success is no longer the potential and its realization, but rather the present quality and its continued development.

Consequently, the ultrawomen's definitions of giftedness are interrelated with their definitions of success. Sometimes they used the same language to respond to questions concerning success as they had used to discuss giftedness. Their responses differed primarily in the greater emphasis they placed on development when discussing success.

Therefore, in this chapter, definitions of giftedness and success will not be separated as they have been separated in previous chapters. In this chapter, they will be discussed according to five themes which were central to the ultrawomen's definitions of both giftedness and success. Product-oriented definitions of giftedness and success are represented in terms of "performance". Process-oriented definitions of giftedness and

success are represented in terms of "perseverance", "self-acceptance", "alliance", and "transcendence". Figure 5 summarizes these five themes.

	PRODUCT	PROCESS			
	Performance	Perseverance	Self-acceptance	Alliance	Transcendence
Gifted	IQ	Discovery & Application	Belief in Self	Compassion	Transformation
Success	Competition Outcome Public Recognition	Living Consciously	Inner Recognition	Community	Spiritual Growth

Figure 5. Process and Product Definitions of Giftedness and Success.

Before proceeding with the discussion of the product and process definitions of giftedness and success displayed above, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the ultrawomen's comments about success were more extensive than their comments about giftedness. This discrepancy may be accounted for according to any of, or a combination of, at least three factors. The first is the possibility of researcher bias. It may be that I disproportionately focused on success in some way which was not detected by me, by the peer debriefer, or by the participants of the study, all of whom reviewed the results of the study. A second possibility is that the ultrawomen preferred discussing success and felt generally uncomfortable with the gifted label with which I identified them. Support for this second explanation is found in the negative comments made by

some of the women in this study regarding the gifted label and in previous research which has indicated that academic identification as being gifted is not always positive for gifted individuals (Kerr, 1992; Richert, 1991), and particularly for gifted females (Kerr, 1985, 1992; Schuster, 1990a, 1990b). Yet a third explanation, which may be the most plausible, involves the possible association of gifts with ability and success with effort. According to previous research, gifted women have been found to focus more on effort than on ability in their explanations of success (Whitley, McHugh, & Frieze, 1986). In addition, the women in the present study are all adults for whom effort, in terms of the decisions and commitments which form their present lives, may be more salient than abilities or gifts whose past influence may only be understood in the most speculative and retrospective of terms. Consistent with this rationale and with Whitley and colleagues' findings, the women in the present study have certainly focused more on effort than on ability. From this perspective, it would be expected that they would, as they have, focus more on the development of their gifts than they have on their giftedness.

Performance

In this first section of this chapter, product-oriented definitions of giftedness and success will be discussed. IQ scores are used to determine where individuals are in comparison with others. In the sense that one is accorded a rank or percentile based on those scores, they are a public measure of our private intellectual performance. Like IQ scores, competition and public recognition make our behavior in relation to others' behaviour a matter of public record. Consequently, in this chapter, IQ,

competition, outcome and public recognition are considered under the common heading, "performance".

Regarding giftedness, where the ultrawomen's definition differs from conventional definitions is in their relative disinterest in product-oriented constructions, such as intellect and eminence. It was evident from the ultrawomen's comments that they were familiar with the once standard definitions of giftedness related to IQ scores or high performance in other areas. Some of them had been identified as gifted according to this definition or remembered other children as having been awarded academic privileges on that basis. However, though this definition was most familiar to the ultrawomen, it was not most preferred. In contrast with the literature, which has largely ignored process-oriented definitions of giftedness, the ultrawomen focused on process-oriented constructions which will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Regarding success, the ultrawomen accepted with reservations such product-oriented measures as competition, outcome and public recognition. While these have essentially been the primary measures utilized in the success literature, for the ultrawomen these were minor, and sometimes undesirable, aspects of success. These aspects of success, about which the ultrawomen's feelings were complex, will subsequently be discussed.

Although the ultrawomen accepted the nature of competition in terms of "mutually exclusive goal attainment" (Kohn, 1986), they were very conscious of how they personally approached competition. All of the ultrawomen rejected all aspects of competition which involved actively discouraging or impeding other competitors, and all of the ultrawomen

valued ultrarunning for its spirit of cooperation and mutual support. Despite having thus limited the potentially antagonistic aspects of competition, only four of the thirteen women interviewed were avowedly competitive. However, all of the women accepted competition as one aspect of ultrarunning. Further, all of the ultrawomen valued non-competitive, outcome-oriented measures of success. In varying ways, they all attached importance to outcome as measured by times and distances.

What distinguishes these findings is the way that the women conceived of competition, and its relative unimportance. The women's attitudes are consistent with suggestions (Kohn, 1986; Fuehrer & Schilling, 1985; Gilligan, 1982; Sassen, 1980) that it is competition, rather than success, to which women object. These women have defined success in primarily non-competitive terms, and even when they have accepted competition, it is on terms which allow for achievement and affiliation.

The ultrawomen entered into the possibly competitive world of ultrarunning with a focus on doing their best and on supporting others in doing the same. Within the community of ultrarunners, it was possible for achievement to enhance rather than diminish affiliation. Some of the women felt that their best performances occurred when they were challenged by other runners. All were inspired by seeing, reading or hearing about the accomplishments of other ultrarunners. As they struggled to redefine their own personal limits, or even human limits, they needed the community of others demonstrating that what they aspired to was possible. In this way, public recognition was important as a way of connecting the community and providing inspiration. Despite this

potential value, all of the women held some reservations about public recognition, and none of them considered it to be central to success.

These results contrast with Northcutt's (1991) findings that second only to "achieving personal goals", "receiving recognition from others" is a primary component of success. While further research regarding this area is needed, three differences between the present study population and Northcutt's population may account for the discrepancy in findings. First, two of the stated assumptions according to which Northcutt's research was conducted were: "Public recognition is a major component of success"; and, "People strive for success in their careers" (p. 5). Accordingly, her population was selected on the basis of public recognition. It may be that this was a sample biased in favor of women who value public recognition. Since ultrarunning is not an activity for which one is likely to receive public recognition, the present study may have had an opposite selection bias.

A second possible difference between the ultrawomen and the women in Northcutt's study may also account for the discrepancy in the findings concerning the importance of public recognition. This difference has to do with the reasons gifted women may value recognition. For someone like Lucine, recognition was important as a way to validate both what she did and the sport of ultrarunning. In her sense of marginalization, her experience is similar to that of other gifted women who have claimed that women's accomplishments were not being recognized (Dagg & Thompson, 1988; Fox, 1986; Goldsmith, 1987; Graham & Birns, 1979; Lenskyj, 1986; Seager & Olson, 1986; Tomm & Hamilton, 1988; Wolf, 1991). In such circumstances, recognition may have a meaning that extends beyond personal interest. Disinterest in social affirmation may be the

prerogative of those who have a secure place in society, or in some microcosm of society. The ultrawomen, whose security in the community of ultrarunning is not based on public recognition, may value it less than the career women in Northcutt's (1991) study for whom it may have had career implications.

A third possible difference between this group and the women in Northcutt's study is that of normative pressure, or "feeling rules" (Epstein, 1988, p. 87) which affect the willingness of individuals to express certain attitudes. According to Epstein (1988), research participants, influenced by normative pressure, may only report attitudes which they feel are appropriate for their gender or group. Although the ultrawomen have questioned the value and consequences of both competition and public recognition, it could be argued that this is an effect of normative pressure. From this perspective, under the influence of feeling rules for their gender and for the ultrarunning community, women who privately sought competitive success and public recognition would be inclined to publicly deny such aspirations.

Although I raise this as a possibility, it seems quite unlikely as an effect among the ultrawomen interviewed for several reasons. First, they have demonstrated, by the very nature of their participation in an activity which is not widely accepted for men, much less for women, their willingness to challenge normative behavior. Second, they have asserted, in various ways, their belief in the value of personal integrity, self-acceptance, and an ability to follow one's inner guide rather than external pressure. Finally, and quite possibly of least importance, they were interviewed privately with assurance of confidentiality in reporting of research findings. Each of these three factors would seem to minimize

the relevance of normative pressure in the interpretation of the findings in the present study.

Perseverance

In this section, the first of four themes expressing the ultrawomen's process-oriented definitions of giftedness and success will be presented. This theme addresses the importance of the discovery and application of one's gifts and the value of living consciously, expecting obstacles, and surpassing limits in the expression of success. Because these aspects are all related to persistence and resolution in the demonstration of giftedness and success, I have categorized this theme according to the heading "perseverance".

In relation to the aspects of giftedness and success discussed above, three issues particularly merit discussion. First, the ultrawomen reported feeling lucky both for having discovered their gifts and having found a way to express them. Second, the ultrawomen placed particular value on discovering their gifts and on persevering in their expression. And third, the ultrawomen questioned the very concept of human limitations. These three issues are discussed below.

With regard to the discovery and application of their gifts, ultrawomen talked about luck or grace in terms which indicated that they both recognized the power of their own contribution and were grateful for any gifts they had been given. Their comments in this regard differed considerably with the findings of previous researchers such as Bell and Young (1986), Frieze (1975), and Lott (1985) who have suggested that "luck" is an excuse that gifted women use to externalize the causes of

their success. This perspective is not supported by the ultrawomen's comments concerning luck.

Given the ultrawomen's acknowledgment of their own internal contribution to their successes, and given the context in which they discussed luck, this did not at all appear to be an "excuse" for them. Rather it seems consistent with recent acknowledgment of the importance of chance factors. Tannenbaum (1991) addressed the issue of chance factors and concluded: "Luck interacts with inspiration and perspiration in a mutually dependent way. ... Without some experience of good fortune, no amount of potential can be truly realized" (p. 41-42). Without any denial of their own training or capacity, the ultrawomen felt fortunate for the abilities and qualities that they perceived as gifts.

In the emphasis they placed on discovering their gifts, the ultrawomen reflected a concern that Noble (1989) found to be common among gifted women. Noble's conclusion after chairing three national conferences for and about gifted women, was that "it is the rare woman who can accurately perceive the depth and breadth of her giftedness" (p 133). The ultrawomen's responses regarding this matter indicated that they felt fortunate that they, unlike many women, had begun to explore the richness of their own giftedness and that they experienced an awareness that the discovery of their potential was ongoing.

When discussing the importance of application in their definition of giftedness, the ultrawomen often talked about "perseverance". The importance of perseverance in studies of giftedness (Cox, 1926; Feldhusen, 1986; Leroux, 1992; List & Renzulli, 1991; MacKinnon, 1981; Renzulli,1986; Walberg & Herbig, 1991) has also been noted in research in sport psychology (Clingman & Hilliard, 1987; Morgan, 1979). For

Feldhusen, "motivation", and for Renzulli, "task commitment" were those qualities that made the difference between individuals who manifested their giftedness and those who didn't.

In their definitions of giftedness the women included perseverance and in their definition of success this quality was revealed in their belief in living consciously, expecting obstacles and surpassing limits. They believed that it was important to consciously live life, to choose to always try to be their best, to be fully aware in every moment of how they were living. They expressed admiration for those who had struggled, and saw these individuals as being successful not so much for what they had accomplished as for what they had struggled against. Their respect for those who have struggled seemed quite consistent with their definition of success more as a process than a product. Their emphasis on surpassing limits both supports and is supported by their belief in living consciously and expecting obstacles.

Although these aspects of success are not discussed in the literature, the related aspect of "effort" has been discussed. And in ascribing more importance to effort than ability, the ultrawomen fit a pattern noted in previous studies of gifted females (Subotnik, 1988; Wolleat, 1979). These researchers associated the tendency to attribute success to effort rather than ability with the Imposter Syndrome. Far from appearing as an indication of feelings of low self-esteem or imposterism, the ultrawomen's appreciation of hard work and struggle seemed to have had the opposite effect on them. Knowing they had the capacity to work hard and persevere seemed to have given them a sense of strength and self-confidence. Further evidence that the value placed on effort was not a denial of ability, is afforded by the finding that the emphasis on effort

was present even in ultrawomen who acknowledged the gift of special ability.

Before concluding this discussion of "effort", the potential influence of the age of the participants in this study should be noted. It is possible that in the course of a woman's life her perspective on the importance of effort and ability undergoes a shift from ability to effort. Young women who are imagining their future lives relative to the abilities they are just discovering may be more conscious of the importance of ability, while women who are already involved in adult lives involving work and relationships may be more conscious of the merit of effort.

For the ultrawomen, the personal experience of surpassing their own limits had led to questions about human capabilities. Many of them noted that their own self-confining beliefs had changed and they had begun to wonder if there were any limits to their potential. References to these kinds of questions about human potential are not typically found in literature on giftedness and success. The neglect of this question may be related to the emphasis on resources rather than developmental potential in giftedness research. Those authors who have raised this issue (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Piechowski, 1991; Silverman & Ellsworth, 1981) have had a developmental rather than a national resources focus. Stevens (1988), who studied a group similar to the ultrawomen by virtue of their ultrarunning experience, reported findings which mirror those of the present study. In his study of the Buddhist mountain monks who run the equivalent of 1,000 marathons in a seven-year period, Stevens noted that through their intensive mental and physical training the marathon monks come to believe that "If mind and body are unified, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished" (p. viii). Perhaps the changing sense of human

limitations is related to the combination of mental and physical endeavor such as experienced by the marathon monks and by the ultrawomen.

Self-acceptance

This second theme, representing process-orientations, concerns the gift the ultrawomen described as a belief in self, and its cultivation in terms of success which involves inner recognition, flexibility and integrity. I have described this theme as "self-acceptance" to reflect the quality of believing in oneself and trusting one's inner judgment inherent in these aspects of giftedness and success. In the ultrawomen's comments relative to this theme, three issues emerged which are either different from or new to the research literature. First, their emphasis on self-acceptance is unusual in a field in which gifts have often been discussed in technological or material terms and success in product-oriented terms. Second, although three of the ultrawomen did express some self-doubts, none of the women considered self-doubt to be a limiting factor, and all of them expressed conviction in their abilities. Third, their ability to affirm themselves in the face of difficult challenges was based on a flexible rather than rigid approach to success.

The ultrawomen defined giftedness in terms of belief in self, which included listening to one's inner guide. The importance they attributed to their inner guide has been infrequently addressed in the giftedness literature. As presented in the literature review, Noble (1987) raised concerns about the importance that has been placed on technologically and materially oriented gifts, and the lack of value placed on gifts of a more personal nature. She recognized that by failing to appreciate the value of

these gifts of inner quality, society has perpetuated a narrow and misogynistic conception of giftedness.

Two exceptions to the neglect of personal gifts, such as the inner guide, have been Leroux and Butler-Por (1993) and Piechowski (1991) who have noted the role of the inner guide for gifted individuals. One woman in Leroux and Butler-Por's study explained the importance of the inner guide: "The truer we are to our inner feelings, the sooner we touch our own spirituality and begin to tap our inner strength" (p. 20). According to Piechowski (1991), this is a crucial element in the emotional development of gifted individuals who may not have other guides available with the capacity to lead them. In these cases, he suggested the person's guide may be "an inner voice, compassion, or the love of God" (p. 291). The importance of following the inner guide is particularly evident at higher levels of emotional development when, Piechowski (1992) has found, "one gains strength from living closer to the center of one's being; consequently one's will flows more readily into action. One lives what one believes" (p. 182).

The ultrawomen consistently reported that if they were gifted, one of the ways would be their belief in themselves. These findings differ from those presented earlier regarding the imposter syndrome but are consistent with other findings regarding gifted people in general and gifted women in particular. The connection between a positive self-concept and giftedness is sufficiently consistent for Feldhusen (1986) to include this as one component of his definition of giftedness. Piechowski (1991) has noted that the fruition of Gardner's "interpersonal intelligence" is a highly developed self-concept. Piechowski's description of this sense of belief in self includes other characteristics also manifested by the

ultrawomen. He notes that individuals gifted in this way have "a highly developed sense of self that does not depend on winning recognition, winning over others, or other such external boosters" (p. 291).

Regarding gifted females, Northcutt (1991) found that the primary characteristic shared by the women in her study was high self-esteem. Callahan, Cornell, and Loyd (1992) and Leroux (1988) have noted positive self-concepts among young gifted women as well. Shaughnessy (1987) also found belief in self to be a salient quality among gifted women and she suggested that this quality may be a particularly important factor in the success of gifted women:

> One overriding feature found in this study of gifted, talented women was the degree of commitment to one's work or to one's inspiration or to one's own self. This appeared to be the sine qua non of success. In order to succeed against overwhelming odds (in a man's world), a high degree of fortitude, ego strength, or belief in one's abilities appeared to be a very important prerequisite. (p. 89)

Further, it has been suggested that belief in self is particularly characteristic of women athletes (Mann & Inglis, 1991; Larsen, 1992), and that consistent physical activity will improve self-concept in female non-athletes (Brown, Morrow, & Livingston, 1982; International Society of Sport Psychology, 1992). The ultrawomen's strong sense of belief in themselves is thus consistent with findings regarding gifted people, gifted women, and those engaged in regular physical activity.

Two exceptions to this pattern of reporting positive self-concept in women are found in Noble's (1989) and Tomlinson-Keasey's (1990) studies. In her research with gifted women, Noble (1989) found that 50% of her respondents considered self-doubt to be the primary obstacle constraining the development of their potential. She concluded that a "profound lack of self-confidence plagues many gifted women." (p. 136) Tomlinson-Keasey

(1990) also discovered a "lack of confidence" (p. 229) among gifted women in her study of the forty women who filled out all five of the questionnaires mailed to Terman's subjects in 1936, 1945, 1951, 1972, and 1977. The extent of non-confidence and "belief that their intellectual skills were ephemeral or were not developed" evidenced by these women was "startling" to Tomlinson-Keasey (1990, p. 229).

Neither Noble's nor Tomlinson-Keasey's findings were supported in the present study. The ultrawomen did not express self-doubt as a major factor affecting their performance or potential. They displayed a strong sense of self and the belief that if they truly applied themselves, they could accomplish anything. It may be that the selection procedures for this study excluded gifted women for whom self-doubt was a limiting factor. Self-doubt may prohibit even women who might have aspired to running from entering the ranks of ultramarathon participants. Further research is needed to explore the role of self-doubt among gifted women who may indeed not be included in studies, such as the present study or Northcutt's (1991) study, because the selection criteria eliminates women who have been constrained by self-doubt.

Consistent with their definition of giftedness as including a belief in oneself, the ultrawomen defined success in terms of inner recognition, flexibility, and integrity. Their definition of success according to these personal terms has rarely been addressed. Terman and Oden (1959) were explicit in their definition of success according to "vocational accomplishment rather than the attainment of personal happiness" (p. 151) and this standard of success has prevailed. Feminist researchers (Hoffman, 1972; Gilligan, 1982; Sassen, 1980) have suggested that women might define success differently, and certainly the ultrawomen have done

so. Largely rejecting the external terms by which success has typically been measured, the ultrawomen asserted that success could only be determined on internal terms. Central to this process-oriented definition is the importance of inner recognition. Defined in this way, doing what one believes to be purposeful and important in life is its own reward. For the ultrawomen, public recognition was relatively unimportant compared to the inner recognition of what they were doing and how they were doing it.

Flexibility, a second aspect of self-acceptance, also merits discussion in relation to gifted women's approach to success. Contrary to the popular sporting belief that success is a product one earns by being hard on oneself ("No pain, no gain") and by unyielding goal pursuit, and notwithstanding the intense effort required in ultrarunning, the ultrawomen women are saying success is the process of being affirming of themselves and of being flexible. For all of them except Lucine, the ability to be flexible was considered to be an essential and carefully developed aspect of success. Without flexibility, they would not reflect self-acceptance in their ability to accommodate to life's changing demands and they would be injured physically or emotionally. They are attempting to do things that most people would consider impossible, not by having uncompromising and unyielding attitudes, but rather by having the capacity to be flexible.

Although the ultrawomen presented flexibility as an aspect of their definition of self-acceptance as success, this quality has been viewed differently in terms of women's career success. Arnold (1993) found that women valedictorians' "professional expectations as college seniors were more vague" than those of men valedictorians (p. 171). She explained this

difference in terms of the anticipation on the part of the women, but not the men, of future conflict between work and family aspirations. While Arnold interpreted this as a "troubling gender pattern" (p. 171) which threatened women's career success, it may also be seen as a strength both in terms of these women's flexibility and their awareness of the need to integrate personal and professional aspects of their lives.

This perspective finds some support in Northcutt's (1991) study of "successful" career women. Though one of the main aspects of these women's definitions of success was "achieving one's personal goals", Northcutt noted that "most of the women interviewed did not seem to set strong, rigid goals. Those who did seemed to use a more informal process rather than a specific three-, five-, or ten-year goal plan." (p. 62). Like the women in the present study, these women valued goals and valued flexibility in approaching those goals. A flexible approach to goal-setting and goal-pursuit may be interpreted as a career weakness of women relative to men or as a different approach to success which may indicate self-acceptance and increased freedom to attempt difficult challenges. Further research is needed to explore these perspectives on flexibility.

For the ultrawomen, success in personal, process-oriented terms included a third aspect, "integrity". Integrity was variously described to mean the integration of "thinking, feeling, and behavior," of the "personal and professional," of "helpful" and "not so helpful" personal qualities, and of oneself with one's environment in terms of being "fully present" or "being part of the flow." In the inclusion of integrity in their definition of success, the ultrawomen have rejected compartmentalization in favor of constructing their lives so "that everything fits in."

Demonstrating the connection the ultrawomen found between giftedness and success, integrity was described as a gift that is received as well as an aspect of success that must be developed. As cited earlier, Noble (1987) and Piechowski (1992) have recognized the importance of integrity as a gift. Belenky and colleagues (1986) describe the importance of integration in the epistemological perspective of the "constructed knower" who wants to avoid "the tendency to compartmentalize thought and feeling, home and work, self and other" (p. 137). While Belenky and colleagues debated whether to consider different epistemological perspectives in developmental terms, based on subsequent studies, others have concluded that there is a developmental sequence which reaches its maturity in the perspective of the constructed knower (Bredemeier et al., 1991).

As cited above, researchers in the field of epistemological development and emotional development have identified integrity as a quality which must be developed. It seems that the research literature is in accord with the ultrawomen in terms of the developmental nature of integrity and in terms of its importance as a personal quality. However, integrity has not previously been considered as a component of success. Rather, measures of success based solely on professional status or salary have, in the cases of the Queen Bee syndrome, the Cinderella complex, and other approaches which pit the personal against the professional, posed integration as a barrier to success. While the gifted women in the present study have defined success in terms of integration, the research literature has validated integration in terms of personal development and repudiated it in terms of success.

Alliance

This third theme concerning process-oriented approaches includes the aspect of giftedness earlier presented as compassion and the expression of this gift in terms of success as community. Because this theme encompasses both personal relationships and community connections, I have summarized it as "alliance". The ultrawomen spoke from a position of alliance, of being supported by and belonging to the ultra community. This is a perspective which contrasts markedly with the image of gifted women as lonely and isolated.

Studies of giftedness have typically focused on those talents and abilities that are directly marketable, particularly in terms of production and defense (Burks, Jensen & Terman, 1930; Cox, 1926; Newland, 1976; Silverman, 1986; Tannenbaum, 1981; Terman, 1947; Whitmore, 1980). As discussed in the literature review, the importance of these gifts has been determined largely by men, and gifts which are stereotypically female, such as compassion, have not been valued. However, recently writers such as Rose (1983), Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1986), Kohn (1986) and Noble (1987) have proposed that such interpersonal gifts may be important to our survival.

These abilities were a vital aspect of giftedness and success for the women interviewed. They conveyed a sense of the importance of interpersonal relationships as well as a concern for the larger community. Many of them stressed the necessity of being a positive influence for the next generation, and of the compassion they felt for the global community.

These abilities have been infrequently reported in the giftedness literature. Notable exceptions include List and Renzulli (1991), who have

reported the manifestation of an inner drive to "communicate ideals", and perhaps to "change or impact upon society" among the gifted women in their study. Similarly, Piechowski (1992) has noted that at Level IV of Dabrowski's model of giftedness, there is a recognition of the "common essence" of all humanity, and at Level V, life is inspired by a powerful ideal, such as "universal love and compassion" (p. 181). The ultrawomen articulated these values in their feeling of connection with and compassion for the global community.

With regard to success in terms of alliance, the conflict between achievement and affiliation that is discussed in the literature, particularly with respect to gifted women, was rarely mentioned by the ultrawomen. The women interviewed espoused a definition of success based on mutual rather than exclusive benefit. The model of success described by these women is consistent with the high synergy model identified by Ruth Benedict,(Caffrey, 1989). Characteristics shared by Benedict's tribal communities and the women's ultra community included the sense of the importance of the community, the belief in a supportive rather than punitive spiritual world, and the rejection of a competitive approach in favor of a high synergy approach where individual gain is linked to community gain.

In their expression of community and their construction of success as including mutual benefit, the ultrawomen also differed from previous findings which have indicated that gifted women are lonely. It has both been suggested (Noble, 1989; Walker & Freeland, 1986) and implied (Farley, 1985; Fuehrer & Schilling, 1985; Goldsmith, 1987; Yoder, 1985) that gifted women are often lonely and isolated. This impression stems in part from the construction of success as competitive, and the consequent

assumption that to be successful one must be alone at the top of the pyramid.

In addition, the historical equation of giftedness with eminence and intellectual ability has meant that gifted women who have been studied, have often been pioneers in their field or working in predominantly male domains (Farley, 1985; Fuehrer & Schilling, 1985; Goldsmith, 1987; Silverman, 1989; Yoder, 1985). Portraits of women in such circumstances lend further support to the notion of the isolated gifted woman. Discussion of family in terms of its potential conflict with career (Boyd, 1988; Kline & Short, 1991; Schwartz, 1980; Shakeshaft & Palmieri, 1978; Wolleat, 1979) and affiliation in opposition to achievement (Bell, 1989; Horner, 1972; Stein & Bailey, 1975) also contributes to the image of loneliness among gifted women. However, choosing to resolve this conflict by eschewing the career path also appears to lead to loneliness. Researchers have suggested that loneliness is more prevalent among women whose primary occupation is homemaker than it is among women who also work outside the home (Birnbaum, 1975; Davis & Rimm, 1989).

Another factor in the perception of loneliness and isolation among gifted women is the almost complete absence of accounts of support or community among gifted women. With the exception of gifted women's references to the support of the women's movement (Kaufmann, 1981; Walker & Freeland, 1986), the subject of community does not arise in the gifted literature. The impression that is conveyed is one of solitary achievement in the face of an unsupporting world, and that may be the reality for many gifted women.

The qualitative approach of this study is particularly suited to the understanding of participants' perspectives with regard to community

(Lundsteen, 1987). Whether the findings to be discussed here are a reflection of this difference in methodology from previous studies or a difference between the ultrawomen's perspective and that of other gifted women is not clear. What is clear is that with regard to their interactions with other ultrarunners, the ultrawomen revealed a perspective which contrasted with the view of the gifted woman as lonely and isolated. For the ultrawomen, success was something that was achieved both individually and cooperatively within the context of the supportive ultrarunning community. Throughout their interviews, the ultrawomen referred often to the feeling they had with other ultrarunners, most frequently using the terms, "family" and "community".

Another possible explanation for the difference in these findings and those which have suggested that loneliness and isolation are common for gifted women is that the gifts that distinguish the ultrawomen may be particularly associated with a facility for affiliation and community building. The ultrawomen could be identified as gifted on the basis of their psychomotor expression, according to the 1970 USOE definition of giftedness, as well as according to definitions propounded by Piechowski (1991) and by Miller, Silverman, and Falk (1992). Consistent with these definitions, it would be expected that they would also demonstrate other dimensions of giftedness. And the results certainly have supported this expectation, especially with regard to the emotional dimension. The ultrawomen's emphasis on concern for others is consistent with Piechowski's (1991) description of emotional giftedness as being recognizable in the "great depth and intensity of emotional life expressed through a wide range of feelings, attachments, compassion, heightened sense of responsibility, and scrupulous self-examination" (p. 287).

In summary, the ultrawomen's emphasis on alliance along with the absence of expressions of loneliness or isolation distinguishes the findings of the present study from those of previous studies. Several possible explanations for this difference have been suggested. It may be that the qualitative approach of the present study is more sensitive to expressions of community or that the selection in many studies based on competitive measures has ensured that women identified as being gifted are in lonely positions at the top of their fields. It may also be that ultrawomen are particularly gifted in terms of compassion and successful in terms of community building.

Transcendence

In this fourth theme concerning process-orientations, transpersonal aspects of giftedness and success are considered together as "transcendence". This theme was addressed in the results section, in terms of giftedness, as transformation. However, the success aspect of spiritual growth was not addressed separately but is found throughout the ultrawomen's comments on success.

Several of the participants in this study had chosen to live spiritual lives. These women described both giftedness and success in spiritual terms and often mentioned transformative experiences. However, these experiences were also reported by other study participants, for whom spirituality was not a central focus. In this section, the ultrawomen's comments regarding transformative experiences will be discussed in relation to the relevant literature on transcendent states. Possible

explanations for the prevalence of such experiences among the ultrawomen studied will be proposed.

The ultrawomen's experiences of transformation, while each unique, share some common features. They occurred while the ultrawomen were intensely engaged in self-surpassing pursuits. They were connected with the women's belief systems and everyday lives in some way. And they were always positive experiences. At the very least, they were welcome diversions, and at times they were profound events which transformed the women's lives. Consistent with their definition of giftedness, the ultrawomen described their transformative experiences as something which was given to them but to which they also, through their own extreme effort, had contributed significantly.

Although Noble (1989) has noted that paranormal or spiritual episodes are common in the lives of gifted women, they are seldom referred to in the literature. Davis, Lockwood and Wright (1991) concluded that "peak experiences are common and widely distributed in the population" (p. 93) but are rarely discussed. Noble's (1989) explanation for gifted women's hesitation to discuss these experiences may also elucidate researchers' misgivings about reporting them when they are revealed:

> Unfortunately many individuals are extremely reluctant to discuss these experiences, in part because of the almost universal fear that one's sanity will be doubted, in part because they are often excruciatingly difficult to describe, and in part because they conflict so powerfully with our dominant Western view of reality. (p. 137)

Reviewing the literature on transcendent states and on psychological health, Noble (1984) concluded that transcendent experiences are "universal, idiosyncratic to the individual, independent of specific context," (p. 95) and "potentially powerful agents of integration and

transformation that may significantly enhance our psychosocial effectiveness, and thereby contribute to our survival as a species" (p. 99). The experiences that the ultrawomen described supported Noble's findings, particularly concerning the idiosyncratic nature of transcendent states, and in some cases pertaining to their power as agents of integration and emotional/spiritual growth.

Piechowski (1991, 1992) has noted that transcendent experiences are characteristic of emotionally gifted people. He describes such experiences as being particularly common among people at the higher levels of emotional development. His descriptions of the forms such experiences may take fit the experiences described by the ultrawomen: "Spiritual experiences can overtake such persons completely just as they are capable of communion with nature or merging with a painting or piece of music" (1991, p. 289).

Transcendent experiences have also been discussed by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and by Maslow (1964b). Some of these experiences, in which the women felt intensely in the moment, are similar to those identified by Maslow as "plateau" experiences and by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as periods of optimal experience which he has called "flow". According to Csikszentmihalyi's research, flow is most likely to occur when "a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult or worthwhile" (p. 3).

Csikszentmihalyi's comments may provide some insight into the prevalence of experiences of transformation reported by the ultrawomen. Although, as suggested above by Noble (1989) and Piechowski (1991), these experiences may be common among gifted women, they have not commonly been reported. This may be, as Noble (1989) asserted, due to

reluctance, on the part of gifted people and/or on the part of researchers, to report them. If however, such experiences were to be sought among gifted people, it may be that ultrarunners would be an ideal population to study. Support for this possibility is found both in the ultrawomen's comments and in the literature.

Several of the ultrawomen reported that ultrarunning was, by its very nature, conducive to spiritual growth. As one of them said with considerable amusement: "I think that anybody who does ultrarunning is starting their spiritual life, whether they know it or not". She was not referring to any set of religious practices but rather to the personal experience of ultrarunning. The reason for the spiritual growth potential of ultrarunning, according to some researchers, lies in the extreme effort and intensity required by an endurance activity such as ultrarunning. Dabrowski (1964) believed that signs of "positive disintegration" are found in people "undergoing severe external stress" (p. 18). Yinger (1969) has suggested that the most difficult experiences "are often the source of increased understanding and powers of endurance" (p. 94). And Murphy (1992) has asserted that "flesh and consciousness tend to coevolve during the practice of strenuous disciplines" (p. 415).

All of these authors point to the possibility that the physical act of ultrarunning may offer emotional and/or psychological and/or spiritual growth potential. That this potential takes the occasional form of experiences of transformation is suggested above by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) regarding the occurrence of "flow" when the body or mind is "stretched to its limits". Murphy (1992) has reached a similar conclusion: "At times, the part of our nature most stretched gives birth to an extraordinary version of itself. ... Where capacities are stretched to their

limits, metanormalities tend to appear, despite the expectations or desires of their recipients" (p. 443). According to Murphy, experiences of transformation are to be anticipated when capacities are stretched to their limits. The prevalence of experiences of transformation described by the ultrawomen is therefore not surprising when the reader recalls the extent to which the ultrawomen explained that the ultra-events stretched their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual capacities.

The ultrawomen described experiences of transformation as gifts which sometimes had a profound and positive effect on them. The present findings affirm the incidence of these experiences among gifted women and support previous suggestions that endurance events may particularly lend themselves to the occurrence of such experiences. These findings are consistent with previous research which has indicated that, for gifted adults, transcendent experiences of transformation are prevalent, are positive, and are potentially powerful as agents of integration and emotional/spiritual growth.

Summary

The ultrawomen have outlined product and process-oriented definitions of giftedness and success. A product-oriented definition -- performance, which has been most reported in the literature, was least valued by the ultrawomen. They emphasized process-oriented definitions which included perseverance, self-acceptance, alliance, and transcendence.

Regarding performance, the ultrawomen talked about IQ, competition/outcome, and public recognition. Perhaps reflecting the continued influence of definitions of giftedness as equated with IQ, the

ultrawomen considered this to be the most familiar definition of giftedness. Despite its familiarity, this definition was not preferred by the ultrawomen. Instead of this definition which seemed elitist to some of the ultrawomen, they preferred definitions which focused on giftedness as a process.

The ultrawomen also reported having reservations about performance measures of success, including competition/outcome, and public recognition. While some of them embraced some aspects of competition, all of them rejected aspects which had harmful personal consequences or jeopardized relationships with others. These findings support research which has suggested it is competition, rather than success, which women find objectionable. When defining success in performance terms, the ultrawomen preferred non-competitive, outcome-oriented measures of success such as race times or distances. Further, although they did not accord it great importance, they accepted public approval as having a limited importance in certain circumstances. These findings differ from those of previous studies which have suggested that recognition is central to success.

The ultrawomen's definitions of giftedness and success in process-oriented terms may be considered according to four themes: perseverance, self-acceptance, alliance, and transcendence. In their comments regarding perseverance, the ultrawomen talked about discovery/application, living consciously, expecting obstacles, and surpassing limits. Their emphasis on discovery and application is consistent with the literature which has also indicated an interest in these areas of giftedness. In their comments on application, the

referred to in multiple criteria definitions of giftedness. However, within the context of discovery and application, the ultrawomen also discussed luck and grace in terms which were not consistent with the research literature. The sense of personal power and appreciation with which the ultrawomen discussed luck did not support previous suggestions that gifted women use luck as an excuse to externalize causes of success.

The ultrawomen's discussion of success as perseverance focused on living consciously, expecting obstacles, and surpassing limits. These aspects of success are not included in the research literature. However, underlying their discussion of these aspects of success, the ultrawomen maintained an emphasis on effort rather than ability. Previous research regarding gifted women has noted a similar belief in effort rather than ability. In the present study, however, the emphasis on effort did not appear to be connected with low self-esteem as it has been in previous studies. Rather, among the ultrawomen, the emphasis on effort seemed to fit the definitions of giftedness and success based on process rather than product.

Another aspect of the ultrawomen's definition of success in terms of perseverance concerns surpassing limits and the connections between human potential and self-limiting beliefs. Their suggestion that assumptions about the limits of human potential may be based on self-limiting beliefs has rarely been addressed in the literature on giftedness and success. The neglect of this issue may reflect a national resources emphasis on identification rather than a developmental focus on potential in the study of giftedness.

With regard to the process-oriented theme of self-acceptance, the ultrawomen defined giftedness in terms of belief in self, and success in

terms of inner recognition, flexibility, and integrity. With the exception of Noble's (1989) and Tomlinson-Keasey's (1990) studies which indicated that many gifted women are lacking in self-confidence, the self-confidence that the ultrawomen voiced and their sense of belief in self is consistent with other research concerning gifted individuals. In their discussions of belief in self, the ultrawomen underlined the importance of the inner guide. There has been little research attention to the development or the role of the inner guide in the lives of gifted women.

The ultrawomen's definition of success according to the personal terms of inner recognition, flexibility, and integrity supports earlier theoretical suggestions that gifted women might define success according to personal terms rather than according to the product-oriented terms such as salary or position by which it has most often been measured. For the ultrawomen, inner recognition meant valuing what one was doing because it was consistent with one's purpose in life and because the process was its own reward. Flexibility, another aspect of the ultrawomen's definition of success in terms of self-acceptance, has been considered a weakness by some in both the sport and success literature. It has also been considered as a characteristic of successful women. The findings of the present study indicate that flexibility may have facilitated the ultrawomen's ability to challenge their limitations.

The ultrawomen's definition of giftedness and success in terms of integrity reflects a sense that this is both a gift which is received and an aspect of success which is developed. Integrity has received attention in the literature in terms of emotional and epistemological development but has not been considered in the success literature. Rather, measuring success solely on the basis of professional status or salary, researchers

have envisioned the personal and professional in opposition. In short, the research literature has validated integration in terms of personal development and repudiated it in terms of success.

In their definitions of giftedness and success in the process-oriented terms of alliance, the ultrawomen defined compassion as a gift and community as success. In this way their definitions are markedly different from those more typical of the research literature which have focused on talents and abilities that are directly marketable and have suggested that gifted women are lonely and isolated. Further, where the research literature has found a conflict between achievement and affiliation, the ultrawomen have proposed a connection in their definition of success based on mutual rather than exclusive benefit. The model of success described by these women is consistent with the high synergy model identified by Ruth Benedict.

When defining giftedness and success in terms of transcendence, the ultrawomen talked about transformation and spiritual growth. Concerning experiences of transformation, the findings of this study support Noble's (1984) suggestion that such experiences may be idiosyncratic and serve as agents of emotional/spiritual growth. Although the women's experiences were each unique, they were invariably positive and sometimes were profound and transformative experiences. Consistent with assertions from several authors, it seems that strenuous disciplines such as ultrarunning may increase the likelihood of the occurrence of transformative experiences and accompanying emotional or psychological growth potential.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

The implications of the findings of the present study for research, practice, and theory in education, as well as in counseling and sport psychology will be discussed in this chapter. The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first two sections, implications of the present study regarding the meanings of giftedness and success will be considered. Limitations of this study will be discussed in the last section.

The gifted women in the present study, referred to as the "ultrawomen" because of their selection according to participation in ultrarunning events, have offered new perspectives on giftedness and success. While sometimes their views are consistent with the research literature, oftentimes they are inconsistent. It is hoped that a consideration of these comparisons and contrasts will contribute to a richer understanding of giftedness and success.

Figures six and seven below illustrate definitions of giftedness and success in the research literature and according to the findings of the present study. In Figure six, terms related to GIFTEDNESS are presented in capitals to differentiate them from terms related to success.

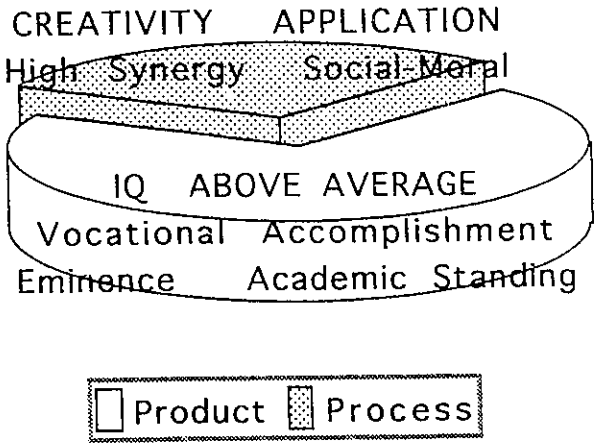

Figure 6. Literature review definitions of GIFTEDNESS and success.

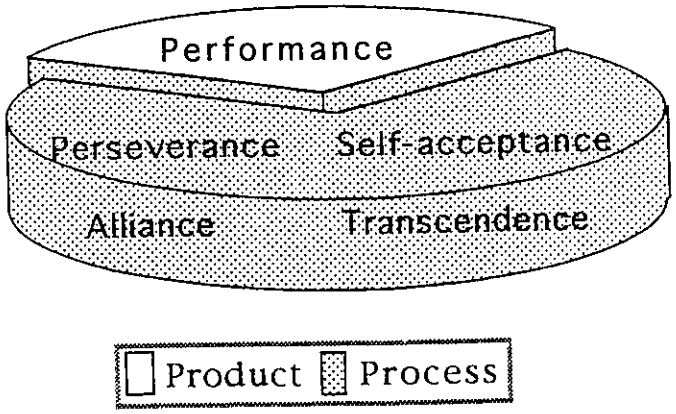

Figure 7. Proposed definitions of giftedness and success.

A comparison of these figures illustrates an inverse relationship between meanings of giftedness and success for researchers and gifted women in the present study. While the research literature has called attention to product-oriented definitions and shown relative disinterest in process-oriented definitions, the ultrawomen have concentrated on process-oriented definitions and shown less interest in product-oriented definitions. The implications of these findings will subsequently be addressed in response to the two major research questions: What is the meaning of giftedness? What is the meaning of success?

What is the Meaning of Giftedness?

In conjoint production with the ultrawomen, I have described the ultrawomen's definitions of giftedness and success in product-oriented terms according to performance and in process-oriented terms according to perseverance, self-acceptance, alliance, and transcendence. With regard to giftedness, performance referred to IQ; perseverance included discovery and application; self-acceptance meant belief in self; alliance pertained to compassion; and transcendence involved transformation. In this section, the implications and possible contributions of the present study to research and practice will be discussed based on the ultrawomen's definitions of giftedness according to each of these terms. As in previous chapters, the product-oriented perspectives will be considered first, followed by the process-oriented perspectives which predominated the ultrawomen's definitions of giftedness and success.

Performance

In their definitions of giftedness according to intellect, the ultrawomen are consistent with previous research. However, they have not particularly validated this definition, and actually indicated some discomfort with the term "gifted" when it was used to describe academic excellence or intellectual superiority. It would appear that for some of these women, schools have been remiss in presenting an accurate picture of giftedness and gifted education. Given that the goals of gifted education are not to provide favorable treatment to some individuals, but rather to insure that all individuals receive education consistent with their needs, the ultrawomen's perceptions of gifted education as being elitist must derive from either the misuse of gifted education or the misrepresentation of gifted education. Researchers, counselors, and program administrators already conscious of this potential area of misunderstanding are cautioned to remember that the image of giftedness and gifted education is of considerable importance.

Perseverance

The ultrawomen valued the discovery of their gifts and affirmed that the development of their potential was ongoing. They expressed the belief that many people had undiscovered potential, the depth of which would be discovered only through concerted effort. In this way, the ultrawomen conceived of giftedness in developmental terms which included the adult life span.

These findings highlight the importance of developmental aspects of giftedness, especially in adults. Both theory and practice concerning giftedness may be advanced by the recognition that issues regarding both discovery and application are relevant for adults as well as children. Further, by conceiving of giftedness in developmental terms across the life span, research and practice may facilitate the realization of the greater potential of human development.

With regard to the discovery of their giftedness, the ultrawomen discussed the element of luck. Without in any way denying the importance of their own expression of their gifts, they stated that they were lucky both for having discovered their gifts and for having the opportunity to express them. Instead of dismissing it as an excuse, perhaps researchers need to further investigate the feelings of luck and grace among gifted women. Is there a place for gratitude in one's good fortune? When is it realistic and appropriate for gifted individuals to recognize the importance of external influences? How do gifted women resolve the differences between their own abilities and opportunities and those of people whom they believe to be less fortunate?

With regard to application, the ultrawomen's emphasis on developmental aspects of giftedness is again evident. In most of the ultrawomen, psychomotor ability was manifested only in adulthood, and at this time in their lives, their psychomotor ability continued to develop, as did their abilities in other areas. The ultrawomen expressed the belief that this development was the result of their own effort and determination. These findings suggest that it may be opportune for researchers to reconsider attitudes about developmental concepts of

giftedness as well as about the role that application plays in the manifestation of giftedness.

Understanding of the importance of application may also be furthered by the ultrawomen's delineation of this aspect of giftedness in terms which ranged from "perseverance" to "adamantine determination". This terminology may indicate that the ultrawomen have extended the concept of perseverance beyond its usual meaning in multiple criteria definitions of giftedness and in sport psychology research. An awareness of the richness with which some individuals conceive of this quality could be useful in evaluation and counseling with gifted individuals.

Self-acceptance

With regard to self-acceptance, the ultrawomen described giftedness in terms of belief in self. Consistent with the ultrawomen's comments, I have labeled one aspect of belief in self the "inner guide". The findings concerning the inner guide contribute to the understanding of an aspect of Dabrowski's model which Piechowski (1991) considered to be a crucial element in the emotional development of gifted individuals. The ultrawomen's comments regarding the inner guide suggest that it played an important role in their sense of belief in themselves.

Further research regarding the development and importance of the inner guide is needed. Such research would be useful to educators and counselors who wished to assist others in understanding, accepting, and utilizing their inner guides. That we know so little about its development or its role, limits our ability to assist gifted individuals in tapping this valuable resource.

Another aspect of belief in self was highlighted by the ultrawomen's comments about effort, self-esteem, and personal belief systems. Researchers have considered "effort" to represent an unstable success attribution, which according to the "low expectancy" model discussed earlier, should lead women to have low expectations of future successes. In contrast, the ultrawomen described "effort" in terms which indicated that it was a factor which led to high expectations of future successes and which contributed to self-esteem.

Through the sustained and intense effort involved in ultrarunning, the ultrawomen have asserted that their belief systems have changed. Through such effort, the ultrawomen came to believe that they could do anything they were determined to do, and that the human mind was the real source of human limitations. Those concerned with what Olshen and Matthews (1987) called "the disappearance of gifted girls", in reference to gifted females' evidence of achievement primarily in their youth, might begin to consider the importance of personal belief systems, and the relationship between effort and self-esteem. Studying the disappearance of gifted women, Reis (1987) suggested that the underachievement of gifted women may be related to limiting beliefs about what can be achieved in life. Future research concerning ultrawomen, or other gifted women whose particular focus is exploring the limits, or "unlimits" of human potential would be valuable for understanding the power of these belief systems.

Considered in broader terms, these findings concerning belief systems may prompt us to envision what, given a commitment, or even an openness to exploring human potential, might be possible. Without self-confining beliefs, what might human limits be? As it has been conceived, the

national resources definition of giftedness has encouraged researchers and educators to identify the top two to five percent of academically performing children and envision a future for them based on the top two to five percent of technologically performing adults. Reconsidering the definition of giftedness in developmental terms, the findings of the present study suggest that researchers and educators might be more daring in what they expected of gifted children and gifted adults. As Silverman and Ellsworth (1981) have suggested with regard to the study of developmental potential, "Through continued study, perhaps we can foster the further evolution of our race into a more humane society" (p. 188). Future research concerning ultrawomen, or other gifted women whose particular focus is exploring the limits, or "unlimits" of human potential would be valuable for understanding the development of giftedness and the power of belief systems.

Alliance

While research has typically focused on those talents and abilities that are directly marketable, gifts of an interpersonal nature, such as compassion, have been neglected. These abilities were a vital aspect of giftedness for the women interviewed. They emphasized the importance of relationships, concern for one's community, being a positive influence for the next generation, and compassion for the global community.

In thus proposing a definition of gifts for people rather than for profit, the ultrawomen fit a model which describes individuals who are driven by ideals rather than personal motive, and who have suggested that we are all part of a global community. Such individuals have been described by

Maslow (1964b, 1971) as being self-actualized, and by Piechowski (1992) as being at Level IV or V of development. With the exception of individuals identified in their study, Brennan and Piechowski (1991) have asserted that the research community has yet to meet the challenge of identifying living individuals who are advanced in the self-actualization process. Further research with women ultrarunners is needed to determine whether some ultrawomen do meet the criteria established by Brennan and Piechowski for identifying persons at Level IV and V of emotional development. However, the findings of this study suggest that within the field of women ultrarunners there are individuals who share in self-actualization ideals and aspirations, and that this population may be well suited to the further study of emotional giftedness.

Although "compassion" was central to the ultrawomen's definition, this is an aspect of giftedness which has been neglected in the research literature. Notable exceptions occur in the research of Miller and Silverman (1987), Noble (1987), Piechowski (1991, 1992), Piechowski and Tyska (1982) and Yong (1994). According to these authors, and to the ultrawomen, development of this aspect of giftedness may be important to our development and even our survival.

Transcendence

Experiences of transformation were common among women who defined giftedness and success in primarily spiritual terms and were also reported by other women in the study. Although these experiences were each unique, they did share some common features which were noted in the previous chapter. These findings are consistent with other research

(Davis, Lockwood & Wright, 1991; Noble, 1989; Piechowski, 1991) which has indicated that transformative experiences are prevalent, are positive, and are potentially powerful as agents of integration and emotional/spiritual growth. These findings may be useful to practitioners in demystifying experiences of transformation and encouraging further research.

Given their potential as a positive developmental influence, further research is warranted regarding the prevalence, precipitating factors, typical features, and immediate and long-term effects of these experiences. It could also be useful to explore the effects of transformative experiences on other aspects of giftedness such as discovery and application, belief in self, or concern for others. Such research could also address incidence, precipitation, and effects of transformative experiences at different stages of development and in different social contexts. In a social context in which such experiences are not discussed, or are misunderstood, they could result in stigmatization or contribute to feelings of isolation among gifted individuals. While research and the present findings suggest that such experiences are positive, if not understood properly they could be misinterpreted as signs of psychological disturbance.

In light of the present and previous findings, it would seem prudent for coaches and sport psychologists, as well as educators and counselors, to be open to discussions of incidences of experiences of transformation among gifted individuals. Educators, counselors, and sport psychologists may recognize a responsibility to examine personal and professional attitudes about such experiences which contribute to the climate they create for students and clients who may need to discuss these

experiences. Further research is also warranted regarding these practitioners' attitudes about and awareness of such experiences.

That such experiences were widely reported among women ultrarunners lends support for theories regarding the precipitation of transformative experiences. Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Dabrowski (1964), Maslow (1964b), and Murphy (1992) have all suggested that such experiences are likely to occur when the body or mind is voluntarily stretched to its limits. Ultrarunning offers a perfect venue for such activity, and it is therefore not surprising that ultrarunners would report such experiences. However, further research with this population, or with those involved in challenging human limits in other domains, will be important for understanding the role of extreme effort in the precipitation of transformative experiences. Does ultrarunning precipitate these experiences and/or are individuals with that potential attracted to the activity of ultrarunning? Do these experiences contribute to self-perceptions of unlimited potential and/or do such self-perceptions enhance the likelihood of the occurrence of these experiences? What is the interaction of transformative experiences and challenging human limits in other domains? Answers to these questions will be important for understanding the interaction of extreme effort, self-perceptions of unlimited potential, and experiences of transformation.

What is the Meaning of Success?

The ultrawomen defined success in product-oriented terms according to performance and in process-oriented terms according to perseverance, self-acceptance, alliance, and transcendence. Performance included

competition, outcome, and the need for public recognition. Perseverance was discussed in terms of living consciously, expecting obstacles, and surpassing limits. Self-acceptance meant inner recognition, flexibility and integrity. Alliance referred to the importance of community. Transcendence was expressed in the references the ultrawomen made to the importance of spiritual growth. In this section, for each of these aspects of the definition of success, the implications and possible contributions of the present study to research and practice will be discussed.

Performance

In this section, the findings of the present study related to competition, outcome, and public recognition will be considered. Because of their implications for that particular research question, findings concerning competition and outcome will be discussed at the end of this section under the heading of the research question: Are achievement and affiliation complementary or contradictory goals? Implications of the findings concerning the ultrawomen's need for public recognition will be presented first.

Northcutt's (1991) assertion that public recognition is a primary component of success was not supported by the present study. The difference between her findings and those of the present study may be due to selection disparities or to dissimilarities in social or professional context. Public recognition may have distinct meanings for particular groups of gifted women, or for gifted women studied in particular contexts. Public recognition may be differentially important for women

for whom it has career implications, for whom it relates to areas of marginalization, and for whom it is important as an element of communication or community. Future research into these aspects of success would be valuable for exploring differences between groups of gifted women, between groups studied in diverse contexts, and for considering the consequences of both marginalization and of social affirmation. Because of the gender stereotype of women as avoiding the limelight, the possibility of the influence of normative pressure should be considered in studies of attitudes about public recognition.

The relationship between the need for public recognition and self-concept and emotional development also merits further study. Piechowski (1991) has proposed that some emotionally gifted individuals have developed a sense of self that does not depend on winning, recognition, or other external affirmation. In many ways, the ultrawomen have suggested that this is true for them. If this is true for them, how did this independence of public recognition develop? In what ways are they affected by the relative lack of a need for public recognition? Research attention to such questions regarding the implications of the need for public recognition among gifted women, could provide insights for those working with certain groups of gifted individuals.

This may be particularly important for practitioners who work with individuals whose expression of giftedness is particularly creative, such as athletes, writers, artists, and performance artists. Davis (1992) has suggested that social expectations and conformity pressures are among the blocks to the expression of creativity. It may be that some freedom from the need for public approval may be essential to the undertaking of novel or purportedly impossible tasks, such as the creation of works of

art, the envisioning of solutions to social problems, or the running of distances typical of these ultrawomen.

Are Achievement and Affiliation Complementary or Contradictory Goals?

Research which measures success competitively often poses a conflict between achievement and affiliation. The ultrawomen, by rejecting or redefining competitive definitions of success, were able to view achievement and affiliation as complementary goals. The compatibility of these goals was represented in the ultrawomen's definition of success according to mutual rather than exclusive benefit. This definition is consistent with Benedict's high synergy model.

Previously, Benedict's high synergy model has been found in indigenous tribal populations and studied in Maslow's work on Eupsychian management (1965). The exploration, in the present study, of a contemporary white Canadian community which supports a high synergy model of success suggests that such models are neither limited to theoretical and historical accounts, nor unique to indigenous tribal communities, but may in fact be more widespread. It may be that further research would reveal that low synergy, mutually exclusive goal attainment is not as prevalent as research definitions have made it appear to be. However, it is also possible that the Canadian women's ultrarunning community is a high synergy aberration in a mixed high-low synergy culture. Research is needed to determine the prevalence of high synergy models of success. Other aspects of this issue also merit research. For example, what is the relevance of Benedict's high synergy model to

education? Is this of particular importance to girls and women, or could boys and men also benefit from this perspective?

The findings of the present study demonstrate that there are alternatives to competitive success. Such alternatives may not be readily apparent if participant selection is itself based on competitive notions of success, such as grades or test scores. Future research may need to account for the implications of selection of participants or sites which encourage competitive-only, non-competitive only, or competitive and non-competitive approaches to success.

In the present study, all of the participants recognized possible negative consequences of competitive success. These findings point to the need for research regarding the implications for individuals and society of competitive definitions of success. As Martens (1976) has proposed, the influence of competition on interpersonal behavior may be as important to study as the influence of competition on motor behavior.

It has been assumed by some that success as defined competitively is good for everyone and it has also been suggested by others that it is not good for anyone (Kohn, 1986; May, 1977). Several authors have indicated that this may be particularly true in the classroom (Anderson, 1988; Clinkenbeard, 1989; Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson, and Skon, 1981). According to Clinkenbeard (1989), competition in the classroom negatively affects the self-worth and achievement of most students. In her study, even gifted students who performed well under competitive academic situations were adversely affected by competitive goal structures which Clinkenbeard concluded were "incompatible with important, long-range educational goals" (p. 293). Johnson and colleagues concluded their meta-analysis of cooperative, competitive, and

individualistic goal structures with the following comments concerning competition and education:

> ...the overall effects stand as strong evidence for the superiority of cooperation in promoting achievement and productivity. Currently, interpersonal competition and individualistic work are commonly found in education in the United States.... Given the general dissatisfaction with the level of competence achieved by students in the public school system, educators may wish to considerably increase the use of cooperative learning procedures to promote higher student achievement. (p. 58)

From their perspective, even given a product-oriented definition of success, competition is not the most advantageous approach for men or women. The ultrawomen supported this contention with their assertion that competition is neither sufficient nor desirable as a primary motivation for running ultradistance events.

Perseverance

In their definitions of success as perseverance, the ultrawomen were very much process-oriented. For these women, success was not something achieved but something ongoing which was expressed in terms of living consciously, expecting obstacles, and surpassing limits. These aspects of success have not specifically been addressed in the research literature.

In their emphasis on the moment-to-moment process of living consciously and on expecting obstacles, the ultrawomen discussed an aspect of success which has been considered in the research literature in terms of "effort". However, the ultrawomen's comments on effort did not support conclusions from previous studies. Researchers who have noted that gifted women ascribe more importance to effort than to ability

(Subotnik, 1988; Wolleat, 1979) have suggested that this emphasis may relate to low self-esteem or to feelings of imposterism. Cramer and Oshima (1992) have advocated training for girls to aid them in acquiring attributions of ability rather than effort. The findings of the present study indicate that effort attributions may be positive and that, at the very least, further research is needed before interventions such as Cramer and Oshima have advocated are adopted. In the present study, the emphasis on effort, expressed in terms of living consciously and expecting obstacles, seems to have reinforced rather than undermined these women's sense of self.

In their acceptance of struggle as positive rather than negative, as something to be welcomed rather than avoided, these gifted women offer valuable insight into another aspect of perseverance. It may be that the emphasis on process and the expectation that there will be hurdles to overcome serves as a kind of inoculation against discouragement. Practitioners may benefit from an appreciation of the value in supporting individuals in their acceptance and indeed pleasure in anticipating the process, with all of its challenges, rather than focusing strictly on ability or outcome. Further research is warranted to explore the impact of process-oriented definitions of success which emphasize these aspects of perseverance. Given that the ultrawomen also defined this aspect of success in terms of surpassing limits, it may be that this orientation is particularly important to those who dream new worlds in personal or professional realms.

Self-acceptance

In contrast with previous research, beginning with Terman and Oden (1959), which has rejected personal aspects of success, the ultrawomen have outlined a definition which affirms the value of these aspects. Feminist researchers have contended that women might define success differently than it has been defined for them in most research, and the ultrawomen's definition according to inner recognition, flexibility, and integrity has supported this contention. Although further research is needed to explore the definitions of other gifted women, these findings suggest that it may not be appropriate for researchers to continue to measure women against standards of success which women have not determined and to which women may not aspire. Further research may also explore the possibility that research based on what has been considered the "male model" using measures such as "income, executive position, and power" (Northcutt, 1991, p. 2) may not even be compatible with many gifted men's current definitions of success.

The gifted women in the present study have defined success according to process, and according to internal rather than external standards. These findings indicate a new perspective for research concerning success. If indeed inner recognition, flexibility and integrity are important aspects of success for other gifted women, understanding of this perspective will be valuable to practitioners working with these women. It is possible, for example, that what has been labeled as imposterism may reflect a sense of not belonging in a world of accomplishment which inaccurately, or only partially, fits a gifted woman's personal beliefs about success. It also might be anticipated that

practitioners who have been concerned about such issues as women's fear of success, would discover a difference in gifted individuals' motive to achieve if success was defined in the process-oriented terms of self-acceptance rather than the product-oriented terms of external accomplishment. Certainly, further research is needed to investigate these possibilities.

A particular aspect of the relationship between success and self-acceptance addressed by the present study was the value of flexibility. According to most of the ultrawomen, success was the process of being flexible with themselves as well as the product of achieving longer distances and faster times. Perhaps practitioners should move cautiously regarding their approach to women and goal setting and career planning.

What are the consequences, for example, of uncompromising and critical approaches versus the capacity to be flexible and affirming? Based on the findings of the present study, it might be speculated that the ultrawomen are able to accept the challenge of the ultra because they structure their definitions of success so that success will be ensured. Other related questions for future research include: Does flexibility differentially affect long-term and short-term goals? And, does flexibility require a developed sense of self-acceptance? Answers to such questions would enable coaches, sport psychologists, and educators to consider the consequences of measuring athletes' and students' successes exclusively according to external, inflexible terms. Perhaps these terms encourage individuals to attempt only reasonably guaranteed successes. For those interested in success which includes self-acceptance, and which involves new realms of endeavor, an emphasis on flexibility may be more

appropriate and gratifying. Further research could investigate such speculations.

Alliance

Research regarding gifted women has largely disregarded the study of community. In the present study, in contrast with previous images of gifted women as lonely and isolated, the findings indicate that community was a valued aspect of the ultrawomen's lives. They articulated the importance of the community in which they lived and worked as well as the community of ultrarunners.

Explanations for this sense of community are not immediately apparent. The ultrawomen see each other rarely. They neither live in physical proximity to each other, nor are they united by a common career, religion or ancestry. If gifted women are as lonely and isolated as the literature suggests, it would seem that ultrawomen have every reason to share in this isolation.

And yet, in spite of these factors, the ultrawomen expressed a strong sense of community or family. I have suggested several alternative explanations for the difference between these findings and those of previous research portraying gifted women as lonely and isolated. Among the alternatives I have suggested, some have particular relevance to future research.

First, the feminist, interview-based approach of the present study may have afforded a particularly receptive format for expressions of community. Also, the standard selection of participants according to percentile-based, competitive measures was not followed in the present

study. It may be that giftedness research has been biased by selection towards people who are more successful at competition than at community. Future research attention is warranted regarding the effect of research methodology, including participant selection, as favoring or not favoring findings regarding the importance and impact of community in gifted women's lives.

Second, it may be that the perception of gifted women as isolated and lonely is erroneous. Even though supported by gifted women's statements of loneliness and isolation, such perceptions are incomplete until they are studied more systematically. It is possible that gifted women experience loneliness and isolation in the contexts in which they are studied and not in all areas of their lives. It is also possible, and consistent with Dabrowski's (1964) model of emotional development, that gifted individuals experience a depth of emotion which is unfamiliar to those researching them. Statements regarding loneliness, unless compared with other comments regarding emotional life, cannot accurately be evaluated as to intensity or meaning.

A third explanation which merits research attention is that ultrawomen have a particular facility for community building. This ability could be what attracts them to ultrarunning, and/or it may be that there is something powerful in sharing the intense experience of ultrarunning that enhances the ultrawomen's sense of community. The ultrawomen's comments about their pleasure in discovering the nature of the ultra community support the former view, while the statements about the heightened experience of sharing in ultra events supports the latter view. Both possibilities merit further research. Greater knowledge about the capacity for and enhancement of affiliation and community building would

be relevant to educators working at both classroom and community levels. It may also contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of affiliation and community building on a global level.

Future research regarding these alternative explanations could provide insight into the dynamics of success and isolation or community. For now, it is clear that success and loneliness are not always and necessarily equated. This information may be valuable to educators and counselors working with gifted women and with gifted youngsters and their families.

Transcendence

The ultrawomen's expression of the importance of spiritual growth is an indication perhaps of a different set of values which may not be consistent with product-oriented competitive definitions of success such as salary or position. These findings are tentative and may relate to women ultra runners more than to other groups of gifted women. However, further research regarding the importance and impact of an emphasis on spiritual growth in the lives of gifted women is warranted.

Limitations of the Present Study

To put the conclusions of this chapter in perspective, some limitations of the present study must be considered. The study is limited relative to the number and specific characteristics of the participants. The specific focus on giftedness and success introduces a conceptual influence which may be considered to be limiting. That the data were collected according to a current rather than longitudinal perspective also

poses certain limitations. The possible impact of each of these factors will subsequently be considered.

Number and Characteristics of Participants

The study is limited to thirteen women all of whom are white, apparently heterosexual and Canadian. As well, they are all adults and were all identified for their participation in ultrarunning. It is quite possible that women with disabilities, women of color, lesbians, or adolescent women might have responded differently. It is also possible that able-bodied, white, Canadian, heterosexual, adult women identified according to different criteria might have responded differently. In reviewing the literature on giftedness, it was noted that the practice of combining or equating the results within or between studies of participants identified according to varying criteria may hinder the understanding of differences among gifted individuals. For these reasons, it is evident that the reference to these women as "gifted women" must be read with caution. In addition, comparisons made between the findings of this study and those of other studies are necessarily tentative. It is hoped that such comparisons will encourage, not inhibit, an understanding of the unity and of the diversity in the population of gifted women.

Two other characteristics of the women in the present study may be considered with regard to the limitations of the findings discussed earlier. First, these women were all selected for their participation in a sport which is unusual for men, and even more so for women. Second, almost half of the women (five out of thirteen) expressed deep spiritual convictions which profoundly influenced their lives.

The participant selection based on participation in a sport which is highly unusual may have particular consequences with regard to these women's attitudes toward giftedness and success. That the ultrawomen have chosen to pursue a sport which is unknown to many, which rarely has spectators, let alone fans, which is unglamorous by stereotypically feminine standards, and which requires a commitment to extensive, usually solitary, training, is an indication of their willingness to stand apart from cultural expectations. Consequently, it might be expected that these women would hold views which are culturally unconventional. Implications of their differences from the research literature and even of their similarities with other gifted women must be considered in light of this possibility.

Four of the ultrawomen were or had been students of Sri Chinmoy, a spiritual Master who advocates ultrarunning as a means of spiritual progress. An additional woman was involved in a different spiritual practice which was nonetheless consistent with this belief. That five of these thirteen women held deep spiritual convictions certainly influenced the findings of this study. However, in none of the findings were their perspectives in conflict with those of the other ultrawomen. It is difficult to determine whether ultrarunning is transformative, as the ultrawomen suggested, or whether these thirteen women represented a unique perspective even among women ultrarunners. Another possibility is that this spirituality is connected not so much to ultrarunning as to giftedness. Theories, such as Dabrowski's (1964), would indicate that a spiritual focus is characteristic of gifted people. Further research is warranted to understand the complex relationship between giftedness, spirituality, and ultrarunning.

Focus on Giftedness and Success

At the time the ultrawomen were invited to participate in this study, they were informed that the purpose of the study was to explore gifted women's meaning of giftedness and success. Beginning with this initial contact and continuing throughout the study, all of our exchanges were informed by this focus. Although many other issues arose during the interviews, they were considered within the context of the women being asked, as gifted women, to discuss the meaning of giftedness and success.

It is not possible to determine the impact of this context within the present study. Both giftedness and success may have introduced a positive perspective that influenced these women's comments in a positive direction. Some other aspects of their lives would quite possibly have been presented had they been interviewed about failure, for example, rather than success.

Current Perspective

Although the ultrawomen varied in age, they are all adults, and this study represents only their current adult perspectives. The connection between these perspectives and their development would require longitudinal study, or at least study of gifted females across the life span. Without such long term study, it is particularly difficult to understand the connections between ultrarunning, giftedness and such aspects of giftedness and success as performance, perseverance, self-acceptance, alliance, and transcendence. As well, this study can only represent the present attitudes of women currently connected with

ultrarunning. What these women believed before entering the ultrarunning community, or how the cessation of running might affect their membership in this community or their attitudes about giftedness and success is uncertain.

Final Reflections

In the present study, aspects of giftedness which have been overlooked in the research literature were found to be central to the participants' identities and to their conceptions of other gifted women. While the research literature has stressed factors such as IQ, and to a lesser extent, discovery and application, the ultrawomen acknowledged IQ but emphasized the importance of discovery and application, belief in self, compassion, and transformation. The findings of the present study, consistent with recent trends in giftedness research, suggest that it is time to affirm these process-oriented aspects of giftedness.

Regarding these gifts, as well as the more familiar gifts such as intellect or discovery and application, the findings of this study included several issues of relevance to research and practice. The ultrawomen voiced some discomfort with academic conceptions of giftedness which may reflect a need for mindfulness on the part of practitioners regarding the image of giftedness and gifted programs. According to the ultrawomen's comments, discovery and application are relevant for adults as well as children. Realization of the potential for development across the life span may facilitate research and theory related to the realization of human potential.

The ultrawomen voiced a strong sense of belief in self. According to the ultrawomen, their limiting belief systems were changing, and through ultrarunning they were coming to believe they could do anything they were determined to do. These findings may encourage new vision regarding human limitations and a renewed interest in the importance of belief systems.

In their definitions of giftedness the ultrawomen also emphasized the importance of compassion. They expressed compassion in terms of immediate relationships, volunteer work, and global concern. According to some authors the development of this aspect of giftedness may be important to human development and even survival.

Finally, based on the ultrawomen's comments, and consistent with other research regarding gifted women, transformative experiences are prevalent, are positive, and are potentially powerful as agents of integration and emotional/spiritual growth. These findings may help to demystify experiences of transformation and avoid possible negative reactions based on misunderstanding or misinterpretation of these experiences. To assist individuals in further understanding them, and in potentially benefiting from them, further research is needed concerning their prevalence, precipitating factors, typical features, and immediate and long-term effects.

With regard to success, the ultrawomen also favored process-oriented definitions over product-oriented ones. The ultrawomen's emphasis on process suggests new directions for research. It may no longer be appropriate for researchers to assume that product-oriented definitions of success are shared by participants in their studies. As well, the ultrawomen's views on competition confirm that there are alternatives to

competitive success, and challenge researchers to find non-competitive options for the selection of participants and measurement of success. The findings of the present study also indicate the possibility for achievement and affiliation as mutual goals. The ultrawomen's comments in this area may contribute to the awareness of contemporary high synergy models of success.

With regard to perseverance, the ultrawomen's comments indicate a richness of understanding and an appreciation of the process which may be long and/or difficult. In their emphasis on living consciously, expecting obstacles, and surpassing limits the ultrawomen have expanded upon the research understanding of perseverance. It may be that the emphasis on process and the anticipation of obstacles provides an inoculation against discouragement.

Regarding success as self-acceptance, the ultrawomen have included inner recognition, flexibility and integrity in their definitions of success. Further understanding of the meaning of inner recognition and integrity may alter the ways practitioners have responded to such issues as imposterism, fear of success, the Cinderella Complex and the Queen Bee Syndrome. Also, the effects of flexible rather than rigid approaches to success warrant further research. Flexible, process-oriented approaches may facilitate self-acceptance and be conducive of aspirations whose realization is not immediate or ensured.

With regard to alliance, in their affirmation of the importance of community, and their absence of comments regarding personal feelings of loneliness or isolation, the ultrawomen offered a new perspective on gifted women. According to this perspective, it is evident that giftedness and loneliness are not necessarily equated for gifted women. Further

research is warranted concerning the meaning of community in gifted women's lives.

Throughout their discussion of giftedness and success, the ultrawomen emphasized the importance of transcendence. Relative to success, this was addressed in terms of spiritual growth which, for several of the women, was the underlying concern in all of their definitions of success. Disregard for this aspect of success could hamper researchers and practitioners in their understanding of the ideals and aspirations of gifted individuals.

Through an understanding and elucidation of these aspects of giftedness and success, research and practice may become more sensitive to the perspectives and needs of gifted adult women. Focus on the perspectives and needs of adult women is requisite to redress the current imbalance in favor of studies of men and youth. Further, in a changing employment era, when women are an increasing presence in the paid work force, and when all workers must of necessity pursue lifelong learning, educators must renew their efforts to be responsive to adult women students. Finally, the almost exclusive study of giftedness in terms of a limited national resources perspective and of success in competitive, product-oriented terms has been unsound for women, in particular, and perhaps unhealthy for men as well. Attention to the perspectives of adult women, and to a broader understanding of giftedness and success, may deepen the meaning of our humanity and may contribute to our desire and capacity to succeed as a global community.

Appendix A

Informed Consent Protocol

(To be read by the interviewer before the beginning of the interview. One copy of this form should be left with the interviewee, and one copy should be signed by the interviewee and kept by the interviewer.)

My name is Gloria Norgang. I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education, at the University of Ottawa. I thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this study. I very much appreciate your participation. Before we start the interview, I would like to briefly describe my study and discuss your rights as a participant in this study.

I am studying gifted women's meanings of success. Since you may have some questions about what I mean by "gifted", I'll begin by explaining that. While giftedness has often been defined according to high IQ, some people have suggested that the IQ definition is too narrow. I agree, and I am interested in exploring other definitions of giftedness. I wonder what gifts have enabled you to decide to do something that most people would consider impossible -- that is, to run ultradistances. And I would like to know more about giftedness in adults. I am particularly interested in learning more about the perspectives of adult gifted women.

More specifically, I would like to know about your views on success. While other people have written about women and success, they have not given women an opportunity to define success on their own terms. I think it is important to allow women to speak for themselves about their feelings and beliefs about success. I wonder how you define success, and what relationship you see between personal and professional success. I also would like to hear your ideas about achievement, and about whether there can be achievement with other people, or only at the expense of others.

These are the kinds of things that interest me and hove prompted me to ask you to participate in this study. So that we can really discuss these issues, I have planned this interview and a follow-up interview. I will tape record your interview, transcribe it myself, and send you a copy of your transcript. you will have ample opportunity to read each transcript and then talk with me again if anything seems incomplete or doesn't exactly fit how you would prefer to express yourself. You will also receive copies of my preliminary and final reports and will be asked to advise me if I've said anything that does not seem accurate or fitting to you. We will have an opportunity to talk in the interviews, and may also stay in touch through the mail and by telephone. If you have any questions, at any time,

concerning this study, you may contact me at 564-7767. You may also contact my Faculty Advisor, Margaret McKinnon at 564-7766.

Now I would like to reassure you that , as a participant in this study, you have several very definite rights. First, your participation in this study and this interview is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. You are also free to ask me questions at any time.

This interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to you and to me. The interview will be discussed only with my advisor, Margaret McKinnon, and with a peer debriefer, Jacquie Gavigan. The purpose of my discussions with these two individuals is to improve my understanding of the research questions and to assist me in evaluating my own process of studying these questions.

Excerpts of this interview may be made part of the final research report, but neither your name nor any identifying characteristics will be included in this report. You will have an opportunity to see both a preliminary report, and the final report, to insure that your anonymity is maintained.

With regard to confidentiality, I do have a question to ask you at this point. As I anticipate that participants in this study may inquire as to the names of other participants, I would like to know whether you would be comfortable with my sharing your name with other ultrarunner/participants in this study.

The University of Ottawa Human Research Ethics Committee requires that all research participants be fully informed of the purpose and nature of their participation in any university study. This does not imply that this study involves any risk; It is simply that the respect to which individuals involved are entitled has prompted the University to make informed , written consent mandatory for all University of Ottawa research. I would be grateful if you would sign this form to show that I have informed you as to the nature of this study, and to indicate that you choose to participate.

Signed:

Printed:

Dated:

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Although the interviews were unstructured, they were intended to provide answers to the research questions guiding this study. Consequently, these research questions were posed in the informed consent protocol and the participants frequently began discussing them immediately. As the interview progressed, I returned to questions that had not been answered and also posed these questions in other ways to encourage a rich discussion. The following is a review of the questions raised in the informed consent protocol and a sampling of some representative questions cited from the interview transcripts. Each question is identified by the number of the interview in which it was posed.

Giftedness

Informed Consent Protocol. I am interested in exploring other definitions of giftedness. I wonder what gifts have enabled you to decide to do something that most people would consider impossible -- that is, to run ultradistances. And I would like to know more about giftedness in adults. I am particularly interested in learning more about the perspectives of adult gifted women.

#11 I'd like to talk a little bit more about the idea of giftedness. And just to go back to that, ... Would you call yourself 'gifted'?

#10 You know how a lot of fairy tales have a Fairy Godmother and she steps in at some time and says, 'I'll give this child a gift'. Do you know those stories I'm talking about? So, if you were going to be Fairy Godmother to some child that was going to be born and you could give them three gifts, three things that you think are the most important gifts to give this child ... What would they be?

Success

Informed Consent Protocol. I would like to know about your views on success. While other people have written about women and success, they have not given women an opportunity to define success on their own terms. I think it is important to allow women to speak for themselves about their feelings and beliefs about success. I wonder how you define success, and what relationship you see between personal and professional success. I also would like to hear your ideas about achievement, and about whether there can be achievement with other people, or only at the expense of others.

#9 When you think of people whom you admire, or who are successful, do they have these kinds of abilities, or qualities that we're talking about? Or is there something else?"

#14 In what way is it important, or how is it important, that others -- And it doesn't have to be the whole world. It could be certain others or maybe it is the whole world -- that others acknowledge your success?

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