Public Abstract

First Name:Derek

Middle Name:Robert

Last Name:Marr

Adviser's First Name:Alex

Adviser's Last Name:Waigandt

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Title:AN EXPLORATION OF SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY IN INDIVIDUAL TRACK AND FIELD OLYMPIC MEDALISTS FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AT THE 2012 LONDON GAMES

The purpose of this study was to investigate the psychosocial aspects of the reported lived experience of Olympic medal winning athletes by the United States Track and Field athletes in the 2012 London Olympic Games, specifically focusing on an exploration of evidence of the elements of self-determination theory. This study utilized a qualitative approach and an interpretive phenomenological design to answer the research questions. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain in-depth data about the three participant's lived experience of winning an Olympic medal at the 2012 Olympic games in London. These interviews were transcribed and significant statements were coded. The codes were then clustered to form subordinate and ultimately master level themes. The master level themes that emerged from the lived experience of all participants in the study were 1) Support, 2) Psychological Factors and 3) Motivation.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis was used to compare the resultant themes of this study to the theoretical framework. This inductive process resulted in consistencies between the results of this study that and the pre-existing theoretical framework, thus supporting and strengthening self-determination and its sub-theory of organismic integration theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The results of this study are useful for athletes, coaches, sport leaders and anyone that is interested in performing their best leading up to and during their performance.