

Editorial

Scientific research is one dimension of Olympic ‘legacy’. This issue of the journal includes three studies drawing on data from the Olympics or Olympians. In his study of power-to-weight relationships and efficiency improvements in athletics, swimming and rowing, Ray Stefani used 461 pairs of female/male winning performances data from Olympic history. Stefani explains why he used Olympic data:

Olympic winning performances are used since those values are achieved after equal four-year time spans and competition is similar for each Games, in that competition involves heats followed by finals for every competitor. (When world records are used instead, the span between records is uneven, men and women may set those records at different times and often the competition is invitational and contested under ideal circumstances conducive to the record). (p. 272)

In a study of three former Olympians, Dean Barker, Natalie Barker-Ruchti, Steven Rynne and Jessica Lee examined end-career athletic transitions using sociocultural learning theory. In this way, such transitions can be understood in terms of “personal reconstruction” in that they “re-negotiate their dispositions and develop new ways of interacting with others and the world around them” (p. 268). For example, former combat athlete Roger (pseudonym) attempted to move away from an “egocentric disposition” when he made a transition to part-time coach (p. 261).

Using organizational routine theory [1], Matthew Grant and Paul Schempp examined the competition-day routines of five male Olympic gold medallist swimmers from the 2008 Olympic Games. This theory distinguishes between predetermined, rigid, unchanging ‘mindless’ aspects of routine behaviour and flexible, thoughtful, changeable, ‘mindful’ aspects. The authors used five qualitative data collection methods, the first of which was a two-day visitation three weeks prior to the 2010 Nationals involving interviews, observations, and establishing rapport with the participants (p. 290). The participants agreed that all information from the study could be made public: “Due to the high-profile status of participants, their identities could not be guaranteed to remain confidential or anonymous” (p. 290). This study was genuinely one of ‘qualitative psychology’ in that it was concerned with the meaning that each athlete gave his actions. Major themes were found to be flexibility, adaptation, time management, and task acquisition. With regard to the first of these themes:

In the mind of four of the five swimmers, the warm-up was not a routine but purely reacting to the environment and how his body felt during this segment of active preparation for competition. Ryan, the only swimmer who saw his warm-up as a routine, described it as strictly prescribed – the original definition of routine. And yet, in other segments of the day, Ryan’s routine was completely flexible. In short, all the swimmers had a recognizable routine once they redefined routine as flexible. This new interpretation of routine as flexible was a critical element for the participants to see their actions of a competition day as a routine and understanding their agency and skills therein. (p. 293-294).

REFERENCE

1. Feldman, M.S. and Pentland, B.T., Reconceptualizing Organizational Routines as a Source of Flexibility and Change, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2003, 48(1), 94-118.

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