

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

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**ABSTRACT**

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. 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. Consistencies were found between the results of this study and the theoretical frameworks of self-determination and its sub-theory of organismic integration theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The results of this study are useful for athletes, coaches and sport leaders.