

Self-Determination in Sport: A Review Using Cognitive Evaluation Theory

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Research on the issue of self-determination and its relationship to intrinsic motivation in sport is reviewed using cognitive evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). It is argued that much of sport participation is a function of intrinsic motivation, and that such intrinsic motivation is facilitated by conditions conducive to autonomy or self-determination. The dynamics of self-determination have been explored in studies of the effects of external rewards, interpersonal contexts, and styles of self-regulation on intrinsic motivation. The implications of this body of work for sport psychology are discussed, as well as the relevant areas of sport motivation research that to date remain under-examined.

KEY WORDS: Motivation, Self-Determination, Ego-Involvement.

The investigation of motivation for sports entails the search for underlying processes that initiate and sustain one's participation (Alderman, 1974). In the early phases of the field this question was largely formulated as «what are the rewards for sport behavior?» However, as investigations proceeded, it became clear that the most salient motives for sports participation (outside of the professional sphere) are of an intrinsic nature. They concern the spontaneous experiences of interest, enjoyment and challenge that are inherent in sport activity per se, rather than contingencies and consequences of a separable, extrinsic nature (see, e.g., Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983; Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985).

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