

Personality within sport

Business



The mind is one of the most important things to an athlete, as it is one of the greatest strengths they have and it can dramatically affect their performance; this is why personality is one of the biggest influences in sport. Your personality is your attitude, feelings and how you react to various situations within life; this gives you your unique perception of the world around you, what you do and how you react to this. Your personality is build up of your psychological core, which gives you your basic and simple aspects of personality, so your likes and dislike; these cannot be rewritten, but through life it does grow. You then have your typical response which is partially rewritable and evolves; this is your attitude, so how you generally react based upon your beliefs and opinions concentrated within your psychological core. Finally there is the role related behaviour which is your specified behaviour based on your suited role; this means it is the controlled and restricted personality of the individual based upon the role they are taking.

It is these three factors which make up the personality of a person. There are two main personality types which roughly defines everyone, this affects various aspects of their personality, but this is especially within athletes. The two extremes are introverts and extroverts. Introverts are commonly the people who rely on themselves and do individual sports, or have a position which reflects this personality type. Introverts are generally independent, more intelligent, timid, practical, self-assured and serious as they are self dependent. Extroverts are typically more relaxed, trusting, group dependent and less intelligent; this is because they rely on others during their sport, or in their everyday life.

Although these are two extremes of the types of personalities, the majority of people have aspects of both types, but will generally sway one way. An example of this is that introverts can also take part in some team games; however, they will almost always be put in a position that suits this personality i. e. a position that does not involve as much team work. As personality is important within sport to aid the motivation and ability of the athlete, it is important to understand not just what a personality is, but also how it is developed.

Personalities are believed to be developed in various ways as there are many theories. However, there are three theories which stand out from the others, and most of these other theories are derived from these three. One of these theories is the Trait theory. The Trait theory predicts that the personality of one's self is not influenced by their surroundings, but instead by the inherited personality of both parents, within the passing on of genes. The theory states that someone's personality cannot be changed and that people are fixed in their ways; this means that our personalities are determined simply by what your parents have each inherited from their parents (etc.

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The problem with this theory is that people do in fact adapt to their surroundings and situations, as we make mistakes and learn from them; however, some people do find it harder or near impossible to change or

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adapt their personality. The theory also suggests that we merely inherit the personalities of our parents; although this still makes us unique it makes our humanity very limited as we are not as adaptable as people think. The theory is also criticised as children are taught to behave and they adapt to that as it is what they are taught, similar to how athletes are trained through discipline etc.

Another theory discussing the origin of our personalities is the Social Learning theory; this theory hypothesises that we learn through interacting with the people around us by analysing their personality at a subconscious level then seeing how they react to stimulus's/situations and copying them to develop our own unique personality. According to this theory it means that the psychological core develops and that then affects the typical and role-related behaviour as they are constantly adapting to develop their personality to their situation/s. By having the personality adaptable, the person is therefore able to adapt to the same situation or something new by using previous experiences to help them make a personally rational decision. Although this theory seems more accurate, as we can learn from our mistakes, people sometimes do appear to inherit some traits or how their mind analysis and interprets things from their parents, as they have a similar understanding of things. However this could be said that it is because of the upbringing and the duplication of aspects of the parent's personalities through socially learning, but it could also be through inheritance of the genes as genes do play a part. The final theory of personality development is the Interactional Approach theory; this theory is a concoction of the previous theories.

The mixture states that you inherit characteristics and then your personality develops over time through socialisation; this means that people's personality will change and develop depending on how they have lived, for example they will learn from their mistakes. However, they are still influenced by the mixture of their parent's genes, hence inheriting parts of their personality. Although this theory has the strengths of the other two theories, it also has its weaknesses. Despite being proved that we do inherit our parent's genes and that we do learn from our mistakes/situations, it contradicts the social learning theory that says that we have a blank canvas when we are born; which some people believe is true. From these theories and from reading various articles on the subject I have developed my own theory. Despite being similar to the Interactional Approach Theory, it is more in depth and its development is better explained.

My theory states that there is a blank canvas for the personality, this canvas is then developed by socially learning. The learning that we take part in is natural as our brain absorbs information detailing and acknowledging our surroundings and the behaviour of others, most of which will come from the people you see the most or have the most influence over you (i. e. your parents, and then in later years, your role models). However, this is defined by a primitive/animalistic core which causes curiosity and a very minor behavioural personality; this is the blank canvas, as the canvas has to be made of something which will then affect the final portrait. The basic core gives an infant something that resembles a personality, but a very basic one as they do not know any better; it is simply our brains trying to interpret the

data it is taking in while the natural instincts within this core controls its main functions.

As the infant grows and the brain develops, it becomes more and more influenced by the people surrounding them, this means they then socially learn which causes the individual to develop their psychological core, and then, as they grow, the rest of the layers of their personality. As much as socially learning is the main source of developing a personality, the various genes which influence the primitive behavioural instincts do vary; this is because these are passed on genetically as they are the basic and most simple instructions given by the brain i. e. to eat, drink. excrete and to interact to survive. Although the parents mixed genes will create a unique individual, this is only a temporary core and simple instinct (a demonstration and basis for them to create their own); this is before their minds start to develop their own psychological core.

So this primitive core is not their personality per say, it is just a natural reaction based upon the basic instructions of the brain of how to react to stimulus's, taken from the genes of their parents. However, this primitive core does not completely disappear, after all they are the building blocks and the centre of their entire consciousness. As the brain develops these genes make their brain more susceptible to certain areas when analysing their experiences and developing their own personality, so they are more likely to notice, remember or copy specific behaviour as they have already had that in the example from their parents. According to this theory, it means that a person's personality is developed due to their socialisation, but that personality is aided and defined further, especially at first, as they start to

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create the psychological core. Due to the development of this new core it will overlap the primitive core and move them further away from their natural origins/primitive behaviour, as this is then a much stronger influence to their decisions and reactions to stimulus's/situations throughout their life.

Although having these genes do mean that some people may be more susceptible to develop certain traits within their personality, this is a very minor factor and would not cause a great change, as the person's experiences affect them more due to the natural ability for humans to analyse and adapt.

The concept that the genes are influential but very minor is supported by the following article, hence supporting my theory: [http://www. psychologytoday.com/blog/the-gene-factor/201111/is-your-personality-in-your-genes](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-gene-factor/201111/is-your-personality-in-your-genes) These theories, along with everything psychology related, can all be applied to sport. For example the decisions made within sports by their coaches i. e. positions played, how to communicate with the athlete and how to work efficiently with them. However, this is dependent upon which theory the coach or player most likely favours/believes in. If a coach was selecting a team from a group of players, if they believed in the trait theory then that would affect their decision as the coach may know the players parents so they would judge their personalities as they would think that the player would inherit those traits or not progress any further than they have already. However, if the coach believed in either the social learning theory or the interactional approach theory, then they would look at the individual players and judge them as they can teach them how to behave appropriately (etc.) and see who has the most potential and who he/she can manage.

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Although the individual's personality does matter, due to the need for respect and honouring the rules, personality also matters when choosing a position or the sport they want to participate in. When the coach chooses a position in a sport, they will place somebody in that position based not only on their performance and skill, but their personality as well i. e. whether they are an introvert or an extrovert. As described previously, an introvert is more independent and adapted to relying on themselves. Although introverts are commonly known to do solo sports, they can do team sports as well.

In the cases where they do team sports they are more likely to play a position that is reliant upon themselves, or where they do not have to work with others as much. For example, an introvert would be placed in goal, as they are away from the main game and the responsibility is solely on them; this means that it suits their personality and they will feel more comfortable playing in that position. An introvert is unlike an extrovert as the extrovert would rather rely on others and work with people more; this means that they would be part of the team, so they would be strikers in football, or part of the pack in rugby during the scrum. In conclusion the theories are all different interpretations; however, some are outdated or illogical due to the human ability to adapt to its environment and the situation. Personally my own theory highlights the changes over time and makes an understandably logical point to how the mind works and its origins (in my opinion).

These theories show how people may be judged, depending on what theory the individual consciously or subconsciously believes in. However, a coach should be able to identify all of these theories and adapt them to the knowledge and understanding they have, hence making them able to make

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a better decision on players. The coach will also be able to choose the players based upon their knowledge of the players and how they interact with other people and the skills that they have, and what they are capable of because of this.