Personality & Sport

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Advanced Sport Psychology
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What Personality Characteristics Would You Seek in Athletes?

What is Personality?

• How is personality related to behaviour?
• How do personality theories explain behaviour?
• How is personality measured?

Personality

• The complex of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that distinguish an individual.
• Relevant factors: drugs, illness, ..
• Developmental factors: age/hormone level, ..
• Situational factors: reduced functioning under duress

Hollander’s Model (1976)

Behaviour Largely Determined by Social Setting

• Milgram
   – crowd size, shock
• Ash
  – Vertical lines
Milgram 1
- People standing around looking up
- The bigger the crowd, the more likely passers by will perform similar behaviour
- Especially when models appear to have status
- Trivial. Does it extend to matters of consequence?

Milgram 2
- Learning and punishment
- 15-450 volts: Slight - Danger - Severe
  - Would not sustain “permanent” damage
- Shock according to lowest of the 3 -
  - another variant
- “Experts” agreed that only the deranged would comply
  - 25, 50, 25

Types of Conformity (Change?)
- Compliance
- Identification
- Internalization

Factors in Conformance
- Why might people conform: examples?

Factors in Conformance
- Fear
  - of what others might think
  - person dressed like Madonna to express her individuality
- Acceptance
Theories of Personality

- Freudian Theory
  - id, ego, super-ego; unconscious processes
- Hull's Drive Theory: $B = HS \times D$

Theories of Personality

- Trait theories
  - individuals described by their particular levels
  - stable over time and situations
  - much of the personality research in sport is based on trait theory
  - Big 5
    - neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness

Theories of Personality

- Behaviourism
  - Stimulus $\rightarrow$ response
  - Antecedents, behaviours, consequences
  - Contingencies
- Social Learning Theory
  - Stimulus $\rightarrow$ organism $\rightarrow$ response
  - Observational learning
    - Emulation of sporting heroes
    - Bobo Doll Study

Theories of Personality

- Interactional Approach
  - Considers interaction between person and situation
  - Emphasizes individual differences
    - rewards valued differently by different people

Measuring Personality

- Triangulation: conclusions based on multiple sources of information: interview, observation, and paper/pencil assessment
- Issues:
  - Accessibility, awareness, transparency, response bias, reliability, validity, socio-environmental interaction, ...

Personality & Sport Performance

- The credulous & the skeptics
  - The credulous believe personality is related to sport participation and performance
    - less agreement regarding strength of association
  - The skeptics believe there is no relation
    - 3 main reasons
      - research not generalizable
      - poor research design
      - inconsistent operationalization of personality
Qualities of Elite Athletes:

- Positive Precompetitive Affect

Qualities of Elite Athletes:

- emotional stability
- relaxed
- conscientiousness
- tough-mindedness
- self-sufficiency
- self-control
- organized

Behaviour Theory:

- Antecedents
- Behaviour
- Consequences

Personality & Performance Pyramid:

- Elite
- Olympic
- National
- Collegiate
- Scholastic
- Recreational

Qualities of Elite Athletes: Positive Precompetitive Affect

Iceberg Profile

Positive Reinforcement, Performance Feedback, And Performance Enhancement
Antecedents

- Antecedents
  - Discriminative stimuli – stimuli with known/predictable consequences
  - Stimulus control – Behaviours are under stimulus control when they are triggered by antecedents

Consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stimuli</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Remove</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Pos reinforce (+beh)</td>
<td>Extinction (-beh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aversive</td>
<td>Punishment (-beh)</td>
<td>Neg Reinforce (+beh)</td>
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Contingencies

- The relations between antecedents, behaviours, and consequences

Negative Approach: Punishment

- Effective –
  - The most widespread means of behavioural control: religion, law
- Negative effects
  - Fear of failure, resentment, hostility (malicious obedience)
  - Potential impact on personal growth of athlete

Positive Approach: Positive Reinforcement

- Mistakes as “stepping stones to achievement” providing info needed to improve
- The style preferred by athletes (Martin & Hyrcako, 1983)
- Inform instead of ridicule
- Effective reinforcer:
  - Is valued by individual athlete
  - Make reinforcement dependent on behaviour
  - Be sure athletes understand why the reinforcement is given
Selecting Behaviours to Reinforce

- Organize behaviour into stages
- Organize behaviour into components
  - Performance profiling

Schedules & Timing of Reinforcement

- Continuous schedule – every correct response is rewarded
- Partial schedule – some correct responses are reinforced, some not
- Behaviours reinforced on partial schedules persist longer in the absence of reinforcement than do those that have been reinforced only on a continuous schedule
- Reinforce as soon after event as possible
- Use continuous schedule during cognitive phase

The End