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ABSTRACT

Although there are exceptions to the rules, research has shown a relationship of certain body types to given sports. Recent research has also shown a correlation between body build and personality traits, and it appears that particular athletic activities attract certain types of individuals. For instance, two researchers in separate studies concluded that weight lifters were shy, lacked self-confidence, and were concerned about their appearance. Nonathletic games have also been studied, particularly chess and bridge. The two games are different in that chess is a logical and analytical game while bridge is psychological. This difference determines to some extent the type of persons who are likely to become experts at each of the games. The results of the Athletic Motivation Inventory, distributed to 15,000 athletes, show that those who survive the high attrition rate associated with athletic competition are characterized by a great need for achievement, orderliness, respect for authority, a large capacity for trust, and great psychological endurance. The implications of research into games and personality for talent scouts and professional gamesters are obvious, but the implications for the remainder of the population are not so clear. There is a need for more study of the games and pastimes of the majority of Americans who do not engage in competitive athletic activity. (HMD)

DISCLOSURE OF SELF THROUGH THE GAMES WE CHOOSE TO PLAY

by

June H. Buhler

Mirror, Mirror on the wall
What's the greatest game of all?
When we play do we reveal
All the things we really feel?
If we do, is there a way
To know ourselves through how we play?

In this day of rapid communication when our everyday conversation includes a discussion of the King-Riggs tennis match, the Fisher-Spassky chess play, references to ping-pong diplomacy, and millions of viewers all over the world followed the events of XX Olympiad with honest dedication, perhaps more attention is being focused on games of all kinds than ever before, and much speculation is raised about the nature of the participants in these contests. Due to the increase in leisure time of members of all social classes, growing numbers of people are taking part in competition, both by participation and by observation. Nobody in America could doubt this trend--Monday through Friday night television coverage of football including pre-game highlights, instant replays, post-game interviews and commentator analyses; sold-out stadiums for hockey, basketball, baseball, and football; a mushrooming cult of tennis enthusiasts; hordes of morning joggers; city planners trying to cope with the increased bicycle traffic;

more race tracks and a longer racing season; increasing numbers of studios for the instruction of karate, judo, belly dancing, tap dancing; and crowded beaches and lakes.

It has often been said that Americans put their money where their interests are. Nowadays two cars in every garage and a chicken in every pot is not enough for the average American family. The new slogan should be: two cars in every garage, a chicken in every pot, a color TV in every den, a Winnebago in every backyard, at least one boat for every family, and a mountain of assorted play paraphernalia such as: tennis rackets, skis, golf clubs, bows and arrows, shotguns, decoys, fishing rods and lures, jogging shoes, bicycles, bowling balls, and a Coleman lantern. Even the underworld knows a good thing when they see one. The hottest item on the black market today is a five to ten speed bicycle! Cyclists have resorted to locks and chains, removing the wheels, and there is even a collapsible model for those who work in office buildings. Along with the outdoor enthusiasts, there are many indoor recreational trends--billiards, ping-pong, poker, chess, fortune telling, and bridge. The wide variety of interests shown by America at play would seem to indicate that no one form of play fulfills the inner needs and provides expression for everyone.

Historians who have studied civilizations from ancient times to the present have always found it necessary to include studies of the forms of recreation in order to better understand the people and their culture. John Huizinga, after an extensive study of the

play-culture relationship, reached the following conclusions regarding play's effect on culture:

> Real civilization cannot exist in the absence of a certain play-element, for civilization presupposes limitation and mastery of the self, the ability not to confuse its own tendencies with the ultimate and highest goal, but to understand that it is enclosed with certain bounds freely accepted. Civilization will, in a sense, always be played according to certain rules, and true civilization will always demand fair play. Fair play is nothing less than good faith expressed in play terms (2, p. 211).

Frederick W. Cozens and Florence Stumpf have also recognized the cultural factors in play:

> Some of the most powerfully influential factors affecting the sports, play activities, and overall recreational life of a people are to be found in the realm of the social institutions within a given culture, together with the combined force of the traditions, ideals, and religious concepts exemplified in the culture (2, p. 70).

In more concise form these authors also state, "The form and type of play and sports life which evolve in any group or nation mirror the development in other segments of the culture" (2, p. 68).

Harry A. Scott also sees the importance of the play-culture relationship:

> . . . it is quite possible that the impulse to play, which is at the root of all competitive sports, even preceded civilization to the extent that it is represented in the original nature of man. Down through the ages the sports activities of the people were influenced by the cultural development of the era. In turn, games and sports helped to influence the character of each successive culture (11, p. 83).

Because of the close relationship between play and culture, peak and depression periods of morality have caused a system of dual standards and practices in sports. For example, in ancient Greece sports contributed to the highest ideals and most coveted

concepts, while in the latter days of Rome they supported and encouraged violence and killing, some of civilization's most undesirable behavior (3, p. 6).

However, John R. Tunis points to the positive values of sports:

> Nowhere are the ways and words of democracy better illustrated than in sports. Day after day we see democracy in action on the playing fields, diamonds, courts, and rinks. Through membership and leadership in athletic contests, boys and girls learn what democracy means. Their guiding words are--"Play the game!" "Fair play!" and "May the best man win" (17, p. 51).

Gregory Stone reached the following conclusions about American sports practices: "The game, inherently moral and ennobling of its players, seems to be giving way to the spectacle, inherently immoral and debasing" (14, p. 89). In this way current sports developments appear to parallel the course of past civilizations.

A quick examination of current literature will reveal to the reader the seriousness of the unethical attitudes and illegal practices which challenge the values of athletics. The problems of overemphasis, subsidization, proselytizing, and professionalism defy social control or elimination. Sports, as both cultural reflector and determiner, have evolved in patterns shaped by their larger environmental sphere (3, p. 6). Thus the values we see reflected in the games we play or watch are not necessarily caused by the games themselves, but by the cultural backgrounds and the personalities of the players.

The widespread interest in games and sports in America is not a new development. The Puritan influence was very strong as shown by the blue laws in many states. The Puritans disapproved of all types of recreation, even to the point of not celebrating Christmas.

However, there were other influences as strong as the Puritan which encouraged many types of recreational activities. June A. Kennard has done research from original sources concerning games and sports in colonial Maryland.

> Colonial Marylanders liked to play; to the dismay of the legislators, the populace congregated to play nine pens on court days and to race horses on the Sabbath . . . In a land of plenty, fish and land game became sporting symbols and not simply symbols of survival . . . Horse racing, yachting, fox hunting, and the playing of cards and billiards comprised an integral part of the planter social scene. Of English origin, the Maryland settlers brought their English sports and games with them and combined these with colonial elements to produce a unique sports and games culture. The crudity of early colonial life hindered the development of highly organized sports. Later on, a more elegant style of life and increased freedom from the necessity of carving a living from the rawness of a wilderness produced more finesse in amusements. By reviewing sports, the historian is able to catch a glimpse of colonial culture (8, pp. 389-95).

Thus we can see that even in colonial times Americans enjoyed playing games. Americans have even made games out of their necessary tasks of survival. For example, a festive occasion could be made of such things as house warmings, barn raisings, quilting bees, sugaring off, hog slaughtering, and corn husking.

Obviously the wide variations in recreational pursuits can be partially explained by occupation, geography, climate, economic status, and cultural factors. However, persons having all these factors in common may still choose different types of recreational activity. Are there studies available which indicate that there are other factors, not so easily distinguished, which may influence the participant's choice of activity?

Of particular interest to recent researchers is the question of whether certain body types are associated with specific activities. For instance, Olympic athletes have been analyzed and categorized according to body structure. During the 1960 Olympics, Tanner compiled data on 137 track and field athletes; they were somatotyped and classified by events. There have been attempts to determine the body types of successful athletes in various sports so as to best predict the achievement one might expect in a given sport. Although there are exceptions to rules, research has shown the relationship of body type to given sports. Cureton body-typed the 1948 United States male Olympic swimmers and divers, and he reported that the best performers represented the mesomorphic ideal in body build. In fact, these athletes were significantly taller and heavier than a large number of the students from Springfield College and Yale University. Cureton also studied the 1948 Olympic track and field team (12, p. 54). Hirata at the Olympic Games in Tokyo made physical evaluations of them and classified them by event. Among the relations between particular sports and the morphology of the participant were the following:

Sport	Morphology
Basketball	Tall and lean
Canoeing	Large and stout
Cycling	
Long races	Short and lean
Short races	Short and stout
Fencing	Lean
Gymnastics	Small and stout

Hockey	Small and a little stout
Rowing	Tall
Soccer	Small and a little stout
Swimming	
Divers	Small
Free-stylers, back strokers	Large and lean
Breast strokers, butterfly swimmers	Stout
Track and field	
Hurdles	Large and lean
Short dashes	Small
Middle distances	Larger
Long distance, Marathon runners	Small and lean
High jumpers	Large and lean
Long jumpers	Lean and not so large
Pole vaulters	Average
Throwers	Large and stout
Volleyball	
Forward players	Tall and lean
Back players	Small and stout
Water polo	Large and stout
Weight lifting	Stout
Wrestling	Stout

An important consideration is that although a certain body type or build may contribute to success in specific activities, it is by no means necessary. A limiting body structure may well be overcome by an emphasis on other variables, such as: height, weight, age, strength, endurance, flexibility, balance, reflexes, coordination, kinesthesis (consciousness of muscular movement), tension, anxiety, stress, acute senses, intelligence, and personality (12, pp. 52-98).

Juan B. Cortes and Florence M. Gatti have compiled data concerning the relationship between body build and personality. In their studies, Cortes and Gatti worked with 100 college girls, 318 other college students of both sexes, 20 felons in prison, and 100

delinquent and 100 non-delinquent boys. They studied the relationship between physique and delinquency, temperament, need for achievement, need for sex, and human values. The results have been promising. The following chart is a part of one of the tests used by Gatti and Cortes which lists in compact form the personality traits thought to be typical of each of the three body types (1, pp. 42-44, 82-84).

Endomorphic	Mesomorphic	Ectomorphic
dependent	dominant	detached
calm	cheerful	tense
relaxed	confident	anxious
complacent	efficient	reticent
contented	energetic	self-conscious
sluggish	active	meticulous
placid	impetuous	reflective
leisurely	enthusiastic	precise
cooperative	competitive	shy
affable	outgoing	thoughtful
tolerant	determined	withdrawn
warm	argumentative	considerate
forgiving	talkative	awkward
sympathetic	reckless	cool
soft-hearted	domineering	suspicious
generous	courageous	introspective
affectionate	enterprising	serious
kind	adventurous	tactful
sociable	assertive	cautious
soft-tempered	optimistic	sensitive
	hot-tempered	gentle-tempered

Body build is a relevant factor in many variables of personality. Its influence is probably higher in temperamental traits than in particular motives or value dimensions. However, physique is merely one factor and many others are very relevant (1, p. 84).

It appears that particular activities attract certain types of individuals. Although far from conclusive, research evidence on the personality nature of athletes representing different sports seems to indicate that athletes may be distinguished by sport on personality-measuring instruments (12, p. 303). For instance, weight lifting is quite different in nature from most sports; hence it is not surprising that researchers should find weight lifters to have distinguishable personality types. Thune and Harlow are in agreement although they employed opposing personality measuring devices on separate samples of weight lifters. Thune compared 100 YMCA weight lifters to 100 athletes who were not weight lifters, on personality and attitude measures. He noted that weight-lifters were shy, lacked self-confidence, and were very concerned with their appearance. In conclusion, he stated that the sport of weight lifting appeals to individuals differing in needs, interests, and personality from other types of people (16, pp. 296-306).

Harlow used two similar though smaller groups of subjects. He administered two projective personality tasks to them, the Thematic Apperception Test and the Sentence Completion Test, and found a significant difference between the groups on thirteen of eighteen variables. Among the distinguishing qualities, weight lifters were observed to have greater feelings of masculine inadequacy, more homosexual tendencies, more of an inability to cope with the environment, more narcissistic feelings, and stronger feelings of dependency. The author reasons that weight lifters

go into their specialty to compensate for feelings of masculine inadequacy and inferiority (5, p. 312).

Evidence distinguishing the other types of athletes is not quite as clear cut. Isolated studies have found differences between groups of athletes, although applying particular labels to these groups is almost impossible, primarily because measurable personality traits vary with the instruments used, and consistency in research findings from experiment is lacking. Slusher administered the MMPI to high school athletes representing wrestling, basketball, baseball, football, and swimming. The various athletic groups scored significantly differently on certain items in the MMPI. The least neurotic group was the swimmers which comprised the only athletic group not to score significantly higher than the norm on hypochondriasis. The basketball players showed the greatest deviation from other groups; they were very concerned with themselves and easily depressed. Football players and wrestlers exhibited profiles quite similar in nature; both profiles were interpreted as being strongly neurotic (13, pp. 539-543). Husman attempted to evaluate aggression tendencies in college athletes. Nine boxers, eight wrestlers, nine cross-country runners, and seventeen non-athletes serving as a control group were given two projective-type personality tests. The boxers were found to have less overall intensity of aggression than the other groups. They had less of a tendency to express aggression outwardly than the runners and the control subjects (7, pp. 421-25).

Flanagan was interested in the personality factors contributing to choice of activity in the college physical education program.

Students were studied from six classes: fencing, basketball, boxing, swimming, volleyball, and badminton. A personality inventory was used to measure such traits as masculinity-femininity, ascendance-submission, extroversion-introversion, and emotional stability-instability (4, pp. 312-23).

A number of traits were found to distinguish the groups. For instance, fencers were more ascendant, higher in dominance, than basketball players, volleyball players, and boxers. Fencers were also more feminine than basketball players. Badminton players were found to be more extroverted than volleyball players, and of all the groups, volleyball players were noted to be the least emotionally stable. Because of the differences in personality of the groups of individuals selecting the various activities, Flanagan concluded that personality must play a role in activity selection (4, pp. 312-23).

There also seems to be a relationship between personality and the selection of non-athletic games. Bridge and chess have been investigated the most, perhaps because they cover such a wide range of psychological functions--cooperative and competitive strategies, memory logic, conceptualization, and anticipatory planning. Chess, however, has had much more psychological scrutiny than bridge. Ruben Fien, a psychoanalyst and grand master of chess, has examined the phallic symbolism and Oedipal conflicts of chess. Bridge has never been on the couch (10, p. 36).

Computer programmers have analyzed chess but not bridge. The reason is that chess is largely a series of analytical problems

with definite solutions leading to the best move. Bridge is a partnership game that requires more than just an analytical grasp of mathematical strategies and best moves--it requires an understanding of human nature. Chess is logical--bridge is psychological (10, p. 37).

The difference determines to some extent the types of persons who become expert at either game. Chess players achieve much earlier than bridge players. There have been many chess prodigies, teen-aged players able to hold their own against anyone. But there have been no bridge prodigies. No thirteen-year-old has ever set the bridge world on fire--not even a twenty-year-old (10, p. 37).

Contract bridge is a psychological battle of wits as well as a game of skill and technique. The bridge player must play his opponents and partner as well as his cards. A young person can master the techniques of the game--play his cards faultlessly and always make the correct bid--yet fail to take into account the psychological quirks of his partner and opponents (10, p. 38).

Although bridge rule-makers have tried to minimize the psychological side of the game by stating that plays should be made without gesture or mannerism and that voices should keep a uniform tone, most people do not abide by the rules. Social bridge players make many small signs about the strength of their hands without consciously intending to cheat. Bridge is now primarily a social game (10, p. 38).

Bridge at home is most interesting to the psychologist because here personality is allowed to influence the play and the play

allows the personality to emerge. When a game is heated and the competition-cooperation roles are being strained to their limit, a bridge player often reveals a side of his personality that is not evident in his everyday behavior. He may become irrational and make decisions impulsively, with poor judgment and remarkably limited insight. Defense mechanisms surface--a player will find elaborate rationalization for his failure, and project blame for a lost game onto his partner. He becomes suspicious of any inflection or grimace by an opponent and he makes astonished denials when his own play is questioned (10, p. 38).

Few games can equal bridge in the passion of their players. Bridge players become addicted to the game. They ruminate over last night's plays and plan next week's strategy. Fair play and determined effort are admirable traits in a bridge player, but they run a poor second to winning. An intense desire to win is almost a prerequisite for any success on the tournament circuit. No good player lacks it (10, p. 39).

A curious discrepancy in bridge is that while 55 percent of the world's bridge players are women, few females have reached the top in tournament play. In sixteen years of competition only two women have played at the Bermuda Bowl world championships. One theory holds that women are too impulsive, too reliant on female intuition. Another favored explanation is that women cannot concentrate on the game long enough. Nothing in the psychological literature can support either of these theories and both must be regarded as incorrect (10, p. 39).

There is one element in bridge, however, that separates the men from the girls, and that is aggressiveness. Helen Sobel and Rixi Markus are the only two women considered to be equals of the best male players and both play exceptionally aggressive bridge (10, p. 39).

The different traits and the degree to which each player possesses that trait determine this uniqueness. Since no two players are alike, we can only talk about the relative similarity of players. Determining personality characteristics, which may have some relationship to performance, is a relatively new approach. A great amount of work has been done in this area at San Jose State College by Thomas A. Tutko, Bruce C. Ogilvie, and Leland Lyon. They have determined a number of personality traits which are related to high athletic achievement. These traits are: drive, determination, intelligence, aggression, leadership, organization, willingness to take directions, emotionality, self-confidence, mental toughness, responsibility, trust, and conscience development. The personality traits are divided into two general areas: desire factors and emotional factors (18, pp. 41-50).

Ogilvie, Tutko, and Lyon developed the Athletic Motivation Inventory to measure these traits. After administering this test to approximately 15,000 athletes, the results indicate that general sports personalities do exist. Athletes who survive the high attrition rate associated with sports competition are characterized by all or most of the following traits:

1) They have great need for achievement and tend to set high but realistic goals for themselves and others.

2) They are highly organized, orderly, respectful of authority and dominant.
3) They have large capacity for trust, great psychological endurance, self control, low-resting levels of anxiety and slightly greater ability to express aggression (9, p. 61).

Most athletes indicate low interest in receiving support and concern from others, low need to take care of others, and low need for affiliation. Such a personality seems necessary to achieve victory over others. There is some question whether these trends are temporary character traits--changing when the athletes get out of sports--or permanent ones. Using men coaches and women physical educators as reference groups, Ogilvie, Tutko and Lyon predict that these character trends remain highly stable (9, p. 62).

They discovered subgroupings within the athletic personality. For example, outstanding women competitors show a greater tendency toward introversion, greater autonomy needs, and a combination of qualities suggesting that they are more creative than their male counterparts. They show less need for sensitive and understanding involvement with others. Women competitors are more reserved and cool, more experimental, more independent than male. Interestingly, they found that there was far less trait variation from one sport to another than there was among men (exceptions were women fencers, gymnasts, and parachutists) (9, p. 62).

They were also able to distinguish a team sports personality from an individual sports personality. Persons in individual competition tend more toward healthy introversion. They are less affiliative than team players, have a higher level of aggression, and tend to be more creative (9, p. 63).

For some sports we could even distinguish a particular personality type. For example, the data strongly distinguish a race driver personality. More than participants in any other sport, drivers are tough minded, hard headed realists. They are reserved and cool. They override their feelings and are not fanciful. They do not show anxiety or tension and are self-sufficient. They are tremendously achievement-oriented, far more than the average athlete (9, p. 61). While the studies cited have sampled athletic personalities which excel in a particular sport, all of us exhibit to varying degrees this correlation between body type, personality, and the games we play.

From analysis of play in animals we know that the more complex the animal, the more play it exhibits. From cross-cultural studies we know also that as culture gets more complex, more types of games are added. Games of strategy appear in cultures in which diplomacy, class stratification and welfare are institutionalized. Games of chance appear where survival conditions are uncertain, and divinatory attendance on the gods is a method of making decisions (15, p. 67).

Studies of devoted game players in our own culture show that they have distinctive attributes to go along with their game playing. They seem to be molded by their games, they don't just "play" them. General discoveries of their nature indicate that play and games are probably functional in culture, even though we tend to view them as nonfunctional or trivial (15, pp. 68-69, 87).

The foregoing discussion seems to indicate that a relationship exists between body type, personality, and the games we play. The implications for talent scouts and professional gamesters are

obvious--physiological and psychological profiles of successful competitors in a particular field can guide scouts in testing and choosing the trainees most likely to achieve.

The implications for the remainder of the population are not so clear. Games, as indicators of certain personality factors, are already being used in vocational and even marital counseling. In the near future, might a game inventory test become as standard a diagnostic tool as the Rorschach? And if certain psychological characteristics influence one's choice of recreation, might playing certain games influence the acquisition of specific personality traits? Game therapy might then become a regular feature of mental health programs, and sports a means for criminal rehabilitation.

Since most of the existing studies are in the area of competitive athletics, there is a need for in-depth study of the games and pastimes of the majority of Americans, who although they do not participate in athletic competition, take part in games of all sorts both actively and vicariously. When we play, do we reveal all the things we really feel? If we do, is there a way to know ourselves through how we play? As leisure time increases, the issue of play becomes more and more serious.

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