

Sample Answer

(b) Assess the individual and situational debate with regard to the performance of sports teams. (15 marks)

The individual and situational debate is a consideration of whether an individual is governed by their dispositional characteristics or personality traits, or factors within their environment or situation. The individual explanation may include arguments about innate influences such as genetics but is more recognised for personality traits. For example, some studies show that team sports are generally more suited to extroverts, while individual sports are more suitable for introverts. For example, Kroll and Crenshaw (1970) analysed personality profiles of different sports players and found that certain personality types were more suited to particular sports. They gave the Cattell Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16 PF Test) to 139 football players, 141 gymnasts, 96 wrestlers, and 71 karate participants. Their results show that football players and wrestlers shared similar traits but they differed from those traits exhibited by gymnasts and karate participants. This supports the individual side of the debate. Oxendine (1980) agreed and suggested that within teams, certain roles which are more explosive are for the extroverts whereas others which require high levels of personal discipline are for the introverts. Another way in which the performance of sports teams could be seen as individual was proposed by Gadesdon (2001) who identified examples of fathers and sons and siblings in elite sports suggesting a genetic predisposition in becoming a successful sportsperson. The other side of the debate suggests situational factors affect performance of sports teams. Tuckman's (1965) research studied how teams develop and proposed 5 stages of development. He argued that all teams go through the same process in the same order. This idea is based on external factors within the group situation that shape the team as whole. All players will arrive at their sport with issues or problems brought from outside the sport, and these could impact on their sports performance. This could also be the case if coaches do not give the teams what they need either through a lack of expertise or motivation. This is shown by Smith et al (1979) who highlighted the importance of training coaches. Another argument for the situational debate is based on home advantage in sport. This was investigated by Schwartz and Barsky (1977) who found that negative effects on the away team accounted for poor performance, again suggesting the situation influences performance. The resolution of this debate in relation to sports teams may lie in the interactionist view, perhaps it is better to consider factors both within the individual and those in the situation, when reviewing sports performance. It is likely that there are individual predispositions which make certain individuals more or less likely to be suited to different roles within teams. However, the fulfilment and success of these roles is mostly determined by the situation in which the team finds itself, and arguably who its leader is.

