

## EVALUATING RESEARCH INTO PERSONALITY AND SPORT

### Sampling

There are two main issues regarding the sample in the Morgan et al study, namely, the **size** and **selection method**. The sample comprised 27 in total, initially divided into two groups of 15 and 12. This is a very small sample which consequently has a greater potential for bias. It is also more difficult to achieve significant results from a small sample (which may have contributed to the non-significant results in the initial stages of the study.) The participants are also all female and all distance runners which limits the groups that the results can be generalized to. The sampling method used was self-selection (volunteers) which again creates the potential for bias. The ideal sampling method is random sampling which causes the least bias but is often difficult to achieve.

The sample used in the Williams and Parkin study is larger and includes different ability levels. However, they are all male hockey players and so the results are not easily generalized to females or participants in other sports.

### Use of questionnaires

There are various problems with the use of questionnaires including their **validity** and **reliability**. The validity problem stems from the lack of universally agreed definitions of terms such as personality itself as well as many of the personality factors the test claims to be measuring. The reliability of the 16 PF has been questioned by Cattell himself as he acknowledges that individual responses and scores may vary according to mood, motivation and situational factors.

Other problems include the suggestion that only **partial information** is collected by questionnaires and that the participants may show a **social desirability bias** where they answer so as to show themselves in the best light rather than answering truthfully.

### Use of interviews

The study by Morgan also used interviews to gather data. The problems with interviews include the **partial or mis-interpretation** of the data collected. **Demand characteristics** may be shown, such as participants displaying a social desirability bias. There may also be **interviewer effects** where factors about the interviewer such as age, gender, ethnic group, appearance, can have an effect on the interviewee. Interviews are also time-consuming and require specific skills on the part of the interviewer.

### Ethics

Personality testing is a sensitive process and testers should not probe beyond what is necessary. The athletes permission must be given and the full details of what is involved and the purpose of the test must be explained. Results should remain confidential and

permission should be gained before giving the results to anyone else. Finally, the tester should be qualified to administer the test and interpret the results.

### **Individual and Situational Explanations**

These studies use only the 16 PF and the EPQ to measure personality, questionnaires based on the Trait Approach to personality. This approach adopts an individual explanation suggesting that personality consists of a set of stable characteristics which are not greatly affected by situational factors. Other approaches suggest that personality is situational or is influenced by an interaction between traits and situation. These research studies give little consideration to situational influences on personality.