Follow the Leader: A Team Approach to MBTI

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Abstract

“Nature” or “nurture”, “instinct” or “learned behavior”, “lead” or “follow”, these are some of the debates regarding the nature of behavior. In the children’s game of Follow the Leader, participants have to do what the leader says or does until such time as a new leader arises. Then, the new leader takes the helm. Similar innate behaviors are witnessed among flocks of birds, schools of fish, and troops of soldiers.

In collegiate athletics, with groups of students these behaviors are also evident. The most successful teams appear to operate as one unit. This study examines how a leader, (in this case a collegiate coach’s Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)) impacts variability in the selection of staff, coaches and players on the team in a Southeastern Conference university from that of a normal sample population.
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or MBTI, is a personality inventory which adopts the theory of types first described by Dr. Carl Jung, and applies it to people’s lives. The tool seeks to allow one to better understand how seemingly random variability in one’s behavior is instead rather predictable and orderly. The behaviors are primarily due to innate differences in the ways in which individuals use their perception and judgment (Briggs Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2009). It was the author’s intent that this analysis of type dynamics of a unique subgroup of athletes and coaches in a defined setting would lend clarity to the concept of team dynamics as it relates to type and the influence that an effective leader has upon a group’s effective functionality.

According to Hunter (2006), assessment of psychological type allows “attention to student characteristics, needs, behaviors, and experiences.” For student athletes to begin and maintain a successful career as both a student and an athlete, understanding themselves and others around them more fully is viewed as a positive action toward enhancing individual and team dynamics. As Coach Mike Krzyzewski, Coach of Duke University Men’s Basketball once stated, “Talent is important. But the single most important ingredient after you get the talent is the internal leadership.” Perhaps a link may be discovered that helps unveil why teams chosen by certain MBTI personalities may be heavily influenced by those individual types in order to be productive and effective dynamic presences on and off the field. Fortunately, sports participation allows for a plethora of “psychological, social, and development opportunities like learning to perform under pressure, dealing with adversity, developing self-confidence and decision-making strategies, and learning communication skills” (Williams & Krane, 2013).

Clearly, these multifaceted opportunities are companionship by a myriad of complex interactions within the essence of the team dynamic. Therefore, the MBTI insight may provide assistance in translating and streamlining actionable behaviors and pre-actionable behaviors to both avoid conflict and enhance program efficiency translating to an enhanced program effectiveness.

The underlying premise of Myers-Briggs Type Inventory is to recognize that while individuals have unique processes for consistent daily life, they typically follow predictable “polar configurations” (Sanborn, 2013). In referencing type theory, credits are to Carl Jung’s theory, interpreted by Isabel Myers and Katharine Briggs as the MBTI personality inventory (Briggs Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2009) whereby personality types are divested based on functional pairs.

These include one’s preference for Introversion or Extraversion (I vs E). The four basic mental functions detailed by MBTI scholars are Sensing (S) and its opposite, Intuition (N); and Thinking (T) and its opposite preference of Feeling (F). The final inventory is to select between Perception (P) and Judgment (J).

Individuals are assessed via a personality tool called, Form M (Briggs & Briggs Myers, 1998), administered by a certified MBTI trainer under controlled
conditions, allowing the participants to select from a series of questions traits or characteristics which best describe their personality. At the end of the survey, the participants quantitatively assess their strengths, arriving at a four lettered Type, aligned with one of the 16 MBTI Personality Types.

Individuals who prefer Introversion draw energy from the environment and internalize the experience, allowing them to focus on the internal state and think about things before discussing them. Conversely, individuals who prefer Extraversion are compelled to objects and individuals in the environment and prefer to “talk things out” (Briggs Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2009).

The perception types, Sensing and Intuition, are differentiated by Jung’s work as follows: Sensing preferences prefer to focus on the immediate experiences available to their five senses while Intuitive types prefer to perceive what is beyond immediately perceptible to the senses and include possible future opportunities. The judgment paradigm focuses on whether individuals prefer linking ideas together via logical connections, Thinking, or arriving at decisions based on values and merits of the decision, Feeling (Briggs Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2009).

The final dichotomy reflects how participants prefer to orient themselves to the Outer World, rather as Judging or Perceiving. However, its analysis and evolution is the work of Katharine Briggs not Carl Jung. Its incorporation into Type Theory classification is essential to fully appreciate one’s orientation toward the Outer World. Judgment types are seen as individuals who prefer seeing closure, planning operations or organizing activities. Perceiving types, conversely, are acclimated to incoming information upon which they may modify or change their opinion or resulting action (Briggs Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2009).

To fully explain type dynamics for each of the 16 MBTI Personality Types is a work into itself; however, a general insight into the types is provided on Table 1.

Table 1: Contributions by Type (Briggs Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2009), p. 38.
A quantitative study resulted from the series of trainings conducted with the group and facets of the group over a period of four months. The Myers-Briggs instrument (Form M) was used to collect data from the participants. The participants included the following: the athletic team (comprised of 119 student athletes and coaches) and 1 head coach was administered the MBTI.

In June 2015, the MBTI (Form M) was given independently to each half of the team. Due to the size of the teams that the researcher needed to split the delivery of the instrument and the presentation regarding the use and limitations of the tool. All student athletes and coaching staff participated, including the head coach.

The resulting types were grouped, sub-grouped and analyzed based upon their particular team functions. Further dialog and additional information was shared with each facet to ensure that an enhanced appreciation for MBTI was developed as well as tools were understood for expansion of the participants range of skills to know themselves and one another better to enhance team synergy and effectiveness. For the research interest, the types were grouped and compared to national norms to evaluate whether this unique group, directly selected by a given MBTI type, would present as significantly variant from a normally selected population.

Observed types were compared as relevant percentages of the entire sample population as well as to the normal population percentiles. Differences were detailed as well. Finally, SRTT analyses were calculated whereby the observed population’s relative percentages were divided by the normal or expected population’s percentages. Detailed analyses are provided.
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The researcher suspected that the leader’s profile would influence the composition of the team and staff such that the types indicated would not be reflective of the typical percentages in the United States.

The results showed a variety of interesting outcomes, many of which were both remarkable and unanticipated. The MBTI trainer further anticipated that, given the athletic prowess required for participation in such a challenging sport, similar types would be found among like positional assignments. For statistical references, the *Introduction to Type and Leadership* by Sharon Lebovitz Richmond, (2008) was used exclusively. It is a valuable tool for MBTI certified practitioners and part of the CPP’s exclusive tool kit.

The team dynamics listed below show the types preferred by the participants as a whole. It is paramount to note that the head coach reflected a MBTI of ISTJ or Introverted, Sensing, Thinking and Judging. This type is present in the normal population at a percentage of 11.6% and in an executive leadership position 15.2%.

Table 2. Team Presentation
Differences in Myers-Briggs preferences for the group versus the total population are detailed. Comparisons are made based on data from the team, total population data, the difference between the two as well as SRTT analysis whereby the percentage of the sample population is divided by the percentage of the normal population sample which shows the over or under representation of a research sample compared to a national base type preference sample.

Interestingly, the group dynamics (team plus coaches) presented a very skewed data set when compared to the normal population. For example, the whole represented 120 individuals. Of that population, the head coach identified as an Introverted, Sensing, Thinking and Judging type or ISTJ. His particular type was represented by the whole with 21 members of the whole. This sample, however, reflected a frequency of 17.5%, 5.9% greater than a normal population would reflect of 11.6%. The SRTT index or ratio at 1.5 showed ISTJ to be dramatically more prevalent in this group than the normal population.

Furthermore, the second most frequent type identified was Extraverted, Sensing, Thinking and Judging or ESTJ. It was represented by 21 individuals or 17.5% of the sample population but appears in only 8.7% of the normal population. The SRTT ratio reflected 2.0 or double the expected quantity from a normal population.

Collectively, ISTJ and ESTJ represented 42 of the 120 individuals from the entire group. Furthermore, this represents 35% of the total with just 2 of the 16 types possible to identify. Clearly, there was a dramatic overlap to have types whose variance only transgressed the Extraverted versus Introverted type to have identified with such a large population of the whole.

Tracking from left to right, Extraverted, Sensing, Feeling, and Judging or ESFJ was nearly non-existent among the defensive players and the coaches. For clarity, special teams were compiled with the defensive group to prevent identification of individuals due to the special teams group having less than 10 members. Among offensive players, it presented in only 4 out of 120 players or 3.3%. Within a normal population, however, one would have expected to see 12.3%. The SRTT ratio shows 0.27, a dramatically lower sample from the group than would be expected from the normal population showing less than 30% of what would be expected.

Extraverted, Intuition, Feeling, and Perceiving or ENFP presented minimal representation as well with only 6 of the total of 120 participants or 5%. This was significantly below what would have been represented within a normal population where 12.3% would be anticipated to be ENFP. The SRTT ratio reflected a value of 0.41, significantly below what one would have expected from the normal population.

Extraverted, Intuition, Thinking, and Judging or ENTJ type representation was entirely absent from representation among the defensive group and only reflected
among the offensive and coaching groups with one individual per group. This ENTJ type in a normal population would reflect 1.8% while among the entire team and coaching group it only represented 0.83%. The SRTT ratio identified a 0.46 value, less than half the personality type concentration of ENTJ that would be expected in the normal population.

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Conversely, Extraverted, Intuition, Thinking, and Perceiving (ENTP) was indicated in 6 of the total 120 population or 5% while normal population statistics would have indicated 3.2%. When analyzed by SRTT, the ratio of 1.6 was generated, indicating that ENTP was significantly over represented in this population with over one and a half times as many individuals presenting as this type as would be expected in the normal population.

Extraverted, Intuition, Feeling, and Judging (ENFJ) was another rare type reflected. With only 2 individuals from defense reflecting ENFJ and no members of either the offensive or coaching group identifying with this type. While a normal type distribution would have expected 2.5% or 3 individuals versus the 2 or 1.6% which actually materialized, this value is not significantly out of the range of what would be considered normal. The SRTT ratio revealed a value of 1.16, indicating that ENFJ is over represented in this population when compared to a normal population.

Extraverted, Sensing, Thinking, and Perceiving (ESTP) represented 6 individuals or 5% of the total group. Within that limited population, offense demonstrated 2 players to identify with ESTP while 3 defensive players and only one 1 coaching member identified with it. This type was reflected close to a standard population since a normal population one would have expected 4.3% to versus the 5% found with this group as a whole. SRTT data revealed a ratio of 1.16, indicating a substantially overrepresented type when compared to what would have been expected in the normal population.

Interestingly, Introverted, Sensing, Thinking, and Perceiving (ISTP), was consistently represented across all 3 subgroups with 4 individuals from offense, defense, and coaching presenting with ISTP. This represents 9.9% of the entire group compared with 3.3%, which would be expected in a normal population. SRTT revealed a ratio of 3.0, tripling individuals within the group identified with ISTP as compared with the normal population.
Introverted, Sensing, Feeling, and Judging or (ISFJ) was represented by 7 of the total group population or 5.8% versus 13.8% for a normal population. Only one of the coaching group presented with this type. SRTT data revealed a ratio of .42, indicating a substantially underrepresented type when compared to what would have been expected in the normal population.

Introverted, Intuition, Thinking, and Judging (INTJ) was represented by only 3 of the total group or 2.5% of the group population. Furthermore, no offensive players presented with this type followed by only one defensive player and no coaching staff. A normal population would have predicted 2.1% compared to the 2.5% discovered. The SRTT ratio produced a value of 1.19, indicating an overrepresented INTJ in the sample population.

Introverted, Intuition, Feeling, and Judging or INFJ identified with only 2 of the total population. No offensive players or coaches represented this type, and only 2 of the subgroup defensive players identified with INFJ. In a normal population 1.5% would have been expected; similarly, this group reflected only 1.6%. The SRTT value generated for INFJ of 1.07 showed the type to be closely aligned with the normal population.

Introverted, Sensing, Feeling, and Perceiving (ISFP) identified 3 of the total population with only one of the subgroup offense and 2 individuals from each of the defense and coaching subgroups identifying with ISFP. This represents 2.5% of the population compared to 8.8% which would have been expected in a normal sample. This represents a 6.3% variance from the normal population. SRTT analysis produced a ratio of 0.28, which revealed a significantly underrepresented group type for ISFP.

Introverted, Intuition, Thinking, and Perceiving (INTP) identified 5 of the 120 participants or 4.1%. This compared to the 3.3% one would expect for a normal population. The SRTT ratio produced for INTP was 1.24, indicating that INTP types are overrepresented in the sample group from what one would expect from the normal population.

Introverted, Intuition, Feeling, and Perceiving or INFP represented a total of 6 individuals of the collegiate group. One offensive player, 5 defensive players and no coaches identified with this group. In a normal population one would have expected 4.4% versus the 5% reflected in this study, a variation of only 0.6%. INFP’s were slightly overrepresented in the group, revealing a SRTT ratio of 1.14.

Supplemental data utilized in observing MBTI preferences for subgroups: The following graphic depicts the expected values, the reported values, the variance noted between the sixteen MBTI types within the normal population compared to the sampled population as well as the SRTT ratio. A graphic representation is
provided to show the individual variances between the group and normal United States population data for each of the sixteen MBTI preferences.

Table 3: MBTI Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MBTI Type</th>
<th>Observed (Sample) Population Percentage</th>
<th>Expected (Normal) Population Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage Difference: O-E</th>
<th>SRTT: O/E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISTJ</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>+5.9</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISFJ</td>
<td>05.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
<td>0.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>INFJ</td>
<td>01.6</td>
<td>01.5</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
<td>1.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>INTJ</td>
<td>02.5</td>
<td>02.1</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTP</td>
<td>09.9</td>
<td>03.3</td>
<td>+6.6</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISFP</td>
<td>02.5</td>
<td>08.8</td>
<td>-6.3</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFP</td>
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<td>04.4</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTP</td>
<td>04.1</td>
<td>03.3</td>
<td>+0.8</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESTP</td>
<td>05.0</td>
<td>04.3</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESFP</td>
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<td>08.5</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>0.78</td>
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<tr>
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<td>05.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
<td>0.41</td>
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<tr>
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<td>+1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESTJ</td>
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<td>+8.8</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESFJ</td>
<td>03.3</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>-9.0</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENFJ</td>
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<td>02.5</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENTJ</td>
<td>00.8</td>
<td>01.8</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most notable variances between the sample population and the normal population are in the following areas where the sample group was significantly greater than one would expect of a normal population:

ESTJ reflects an 8.8% higher prevalence in the sample population.
ISTP reflects a 6.6% higher prevalence in the sample population.
ISTJ reflects a 5.9% higher prevalence between the sample population.

The converse situation was also noticed where the sample population was markedly below what one would expect of a normal population.

ESFJ reflects a 9% lower presence in the sample population.
ISFJ reflects a 8.0% lower presence in the sample population.
ENFP reflects a 7.3% lower presence in the sample population.
ISFP reflects a 6.3% lower presence in the sample population.

The three highest variances for the out of range sample population occur along the ST dichotomy where all three ESTJ, ISTP, and ISTJ are present in significantly higher quantities than one would expect in a normal population, 17.5, 9.9, and 17.5,
respectively. In simplest terms, nearly 45% of the entire team and coaching set best identify with ISTJ, ISTP, or ESTJ personality types.

SRTT analysis revealed that ISTJ, ENTP, ISTP, and ESTJ were significantly above (1.5 times or greater) than what would be expected in the normal population where ESFJ and ISFP. Conversely, SRTT ratios revealed that ESFJ, ISFP, ISFJ, ENFP, and ENTJ’s each represented less than half the numbers that would be expected in a normal population.

If one were to focus exclusively on a remarkably present dichotomy, the ST or Sensing and Thinking set, shows variations in excess of normal presentations for every type containing an ST pair with 3 of the 4 over represented SRTT ratios to reflect types with ST pairs.

Conversely, the most notable types with significantly lower presentations, ESFJ, ISFJ, ENFP, and ISFP all have consistency with the presence of the F or feeling type indicator. These types reflect 9%, 8%, 7.3%, and 6.3% less than would be expected in a normal population, respectively. Further, they represented less than half the representation one would have expected for a normal population according to the SRTT ratio.

Therefore, the data indicates that the prevalence of the ST (sensing and thinking) dichotomy, especially when a subset of either ESTJ, ISTP, or ISTJ personas appears to be a dominant strength of the group. The fourth dominant subgroup, ENTP, while absent the sensing type, consistently presented with the thinking type, T.

Conversely, the presence of the F (feeling) trait appeared to be significantly absent in the group dynamics when compared to the normal population. It was recognized in the 5 personality types which were least reflected in the sample population, reflecting SRTT ratios below 0.5.

Given that the head coach identifies most closely with the ISTJ personality profile, while not conclusive evidence, it lends emphasis to the thought that his selection of both coaches as well as players is influenced by his ST dichotomy. Further, and perhaps just as significant, is the notable absence of feeling types, F, throughout the group, especially with regard to the coaching subgroup.

It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that one’s identified personality profile through MBTI, highly influences his perception of both ideal coaches and players which he selects/recruits for his team or group. Given that these subgroups selected were heavily skewed to toward the ST dichotomy, one would reasonably infer that these personality preferences are considered key to acclimating to the team’s dynamic.
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Further research into additional team preferences with different coaches and in various sports has the potential to be most validating in further exploring the likelihood that a coach’s Myers Briggs Personality Inventory influences who he views as the best fit for his game and best suited to following his lead.

Much gratitude is due to the coaches and athletes for their patience and cooperation in this multi-phase analysis of group dynamics, which began as a curiosity and evolved into an observational pattern of behavior, unanticipated in the researcher’s original plan. As with many a great investigation, the reward was not in the inception or the presentation but rather in the exploration of type with a remarkable audience.
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Works Cited