Part Two of Kobe Bryant Personality Profile

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Kobe Bryant (known as "Kobe", or "Kob") was born on August 23, 1978, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and died in a tragic helicopter crash with his 13-year old daughter Gianna "Gigi" Bryant on January 26, 2020. Kobe was the son of former NBA player Joe Bryant and Pamela Cox Bryant. In 1984, Joe Bryant took Kobe and the rest of his family to Italy, where he played in the Italian Basketball League. While in Italy, Kobe had the opportunity to become fluent in the Italian language and spend a majority of his free time working on basketball with his father. Kobe spent seven years living in Italy (from the ages of 6 to 13) and returned to Philadelphia just in time to begin high school at Lower Merion in 1991. Kobe led his team to four consecutive state final appearances, becoming a national phenom in basketball at the high school level. Following his high school graduation, at the age of 17, Kobe was drafted by the Charlotte Hornets as the 13th overall pick in the 1996 NBA draft. Shortly after, he was traded to the Los Angeles Lakers, where he established his iconic career as an American professional basketball player. Kobe played twenty seasons with the Lakers and helped them win five NBA championships. He retired from basketball in 2016, but his historic career is almost unforgettable. According to Basketball-Reference (2020), Kobe acquired statistics in every area of basketball, but most notably finished with 33,643 career points scored (4th all time), 8,378 career free throws made (3rd all time), 6,306 career assists (31st all time), and 1,944 career steals (17th all time). In April of 2020, Kobe was inducted into the National Basketball Association's Hall-of-Fame as a player. These accomplishments, though impressive, is not what stands out the most when thinking about Kobe Bryant's legacy. Instead, It's his character. Professional athletes strive to achieve Kobe's superior level of drive, competitiveness, relentlessness, attention to detail, and intense focus. He was a tremendous leader and role model for anyone who played the game of basketball. He consistently reached out to NBA players and gave them tips to help

improve their game. Bryant once said, "The most important thing is to try and inspire people so that they can be great at whatever they want to do" (Jones, 2020). He did this by establishing what is known as the "mamba mentality," which is a philosophy that is based on working hard to fulfill one's dreams, and striving to always get better (Tailor, 2020). For Bryant, his "mamba mentality" stretched far outside the lines of basketball and served more as a way to live life. After retiring from basketball in 2016, Kobe applied his "mamba mentality" in several other areas of his life. In 2018 he won an Oscar for best animated short film, became a TV host for his show *Detail*, and published a book titled *Mamba Mentality: How I play*.

When looking at the life and personality of Kobe Bryant from the Five Factor Model in the Dispositional domain, most insight can be obtained from his published book, and what his close friends and colleagues say his personality is like. A beginning understanding of where he lies inside this model can be established based on interviews with him and with past teammates. The Five-Factor model, also known as the Big Five, is a synthesis of the previously established Lexical approach, and statistical approaches to personality (Larsen & Buss, 2018). This model, at the core, consists of 5 categories of personality that each contain their own groupings of traits relating to that category. The five categories consist of: Extraversion/surgency, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism (emotional stability/instability), and openness. Examples of traits within these categories that relate to Bryant would be sociable/reclusive in the extraversion category, cooperative/negativistic in agreeableness category, persevering/quitting in the conscientiousness category, poised/nervous and tense in the neuroticism category, and intellectual/unreflective and narrow in the openness category. It is crucial to gather credible observer-report data and balance it with self-report data when developing a Five Factor Model for someone such as Kobe Bryant. In addition, it is important to consider data and sources that

were published before his tragic death. Doing so will produce a more balanced and unbiased results for the model.

Kobe Bryant gave his coach, Phil Jackson, the introductory section in his book *Mamba Mentality: How I Play*. Jackson thought very highly of Bryant and offered a deeper understanding of the detailed and dedicated way Kobe approached the game from an observational perspective and, in turn, how basketball influenced his personality and life. Jackson speaks of the time Bryant, at age seventeen, first entered the NBA already containing the desire and talent to become one of the greatest players of all time. He claimed that Kobe achieved that goal through his dedication and perseverance, and that his level of success came entirely from within himself. Jackson expressed that when he and his staff would meet at 8:30 a.m. at their facility, Kobe would already be parked in the car next to his designated spot, taking a nap. Kobe showed up at 6:00 a.m. to get his pre-practice workout done before anyone else showed up, which persisted every day for the next ten years. Kobe led by example and challenged his teammates to try and keep up (Bryant, 2018), demonstrating incredible leadership. He had a passion for spreading his mamba mentality throughout the basketball world during his career, and during his final years in the NBA it was put to the test through injuries and surgeries. Kobe explains how he played through the pain in his book, *The Mamba Mentality: How I Play,* by using his broken finger as an example. Bryant asked his doctor if his finger was going to get better and he said no. Kobe responded and said "Exactly, there's nothing we can do about it now and it can't get worse, so tape it up and let's go." From that moment on, Kobe had to wear a splint and tape his finger up every time he stepped on the court. The true test, however, occurred on April 12th, 2013, when Kobe played in a game while nursing a sprained ankle. Kobe hyperextended his knee in the first half but displayed his unwillingness to quit when he returned

to play shortly after the injury removed him from the game. With three minutes left in the fourth

quarter, Kobe was attacking the hoop when he tore his Achilles. He made the decision to

continue fighting and make both of his free throws before heading back to the locker room for an

evaluation. In these instances, Kobe demonstrated elite levels of drive, passion, and

competitiveness. He refused to quit and poured everything he had into the sport. Basketball was

an essential part of who he is, and according to Kobe, the key to his success was his ability to

manage his emotions like no one else could. He claimed that he always had the self-awareness to

feel when his emotions were beginning to heighten and would recalibrate them back to a subtle

level before things spiraled downhill. He built his game to have no holes through his ability to

self-assess, diagnose weaknesses, and turn those flaws into strengths (Bryant, 2018).

This data suggests that Kobe Bryant may lie significantly high on levels of

Conscientiousness, considering his determination to win, self-discipline to remain focused on

achieving his goals, and preparation for each game or practice, being both organized and careful.

In addition, he remained loyal to the Lakers throughout his twenty seasons with them and was an

active member of the team by leading them to five NBA Championships. Another category that

Kobe may lie fairly high on is Extraversion. His daily behaviors were framed around his mamba

mentality, which required him to be assertive in active and energetic ways. Kobe, as a public

figure, continually engaged in conversations with his fans, willing to participate in interviews,

and was open about himself to others on a regular basis. However, in his book *The Mamba

Mentality: How I Play,* Kobe acknowledged that his favorite part about "game day" was arriving

at the stadium before anyone else got there. He describes a particular "stillness" in the arena

when "it's just you, the basket, the court, and your imagination" (Bryant, 2018). The isolation

Kobe enjoyed before each game reflects someone with low levels of extraversion, which leads

me to believe that he may not be as extroverted as I thought. In his show, *Detail*, Kobe breaks

down the game of basketball in a tremendously deep way, helping players notice what they are

doing wrong and where they can get better. This helpful act seemingly implies that Kobe may lie

pretty high on agreeableness as well as conscientiousness and extraversion. Kobe was always

very vocal about how important it is to remain calm and secure when it matters the most, which

reflects lower levels of neuroticism. The critical moments in the game seemingly brought the

best out of Bryant, demonstrating emotional stability in the face of adversity (Bryant, 2018).

The way Bryant utilized his mental toughness and where he appears to measure on the

Five Factor Model can offer insight on how, from an adjustive domain perspective, he develops

health-promoting behaviors, coping mechanisms, and manages stress. One model in the

adjustment domain of personality is the Health Behavior Model. This model suggests that

personality does not directly influence the relationship between stress and illness and, instead, it

affects health indirectly through health-promoting or health-degrading behaviors (Larsen &

Buss, 2018). As a professional basketball player, it was crucial for Kobe Bryant to maintain

optimal health throughout his entire career. Since he appears to score highly in the

conscientiousness category in the Five Factor Model, it can be implied that he has developed

healthy behaviors to prevent illness or injury and to cope with stress. In his book, *Mamba*

Mentality: How I Play, he unveiled a variety of productive and health-promoting behaviors. The

central focus of these behaviors is to listen to your body because it includes all the necessary

variables to sustain health. Bryant illustrated that if someone wants to be great at basketball, then

they have to be in great shape. He placed an enormous emphasis on how he worked relentlessly

to make sure that his legs and lungs were always at peak performance (Bryant, 2018). Bryant had

a particular routine for taking care of his body both before and after each time he stepped in the

gym. Before his workout, what he called "a song of ice and fire," consisted of contrast therapy, where the goal was to loosen up his joints or numb certain body parts. Bryant would begin with four minutes of ice-cold water and switch to three minutes of hot water, reducing the amount of time by a minute after each sequence, until ending with one minute in the cold water. Bryant had also had particular philosophy regarding pain in which he called, "cause and effect" (Bryant, 2018). He believed that pain in one area of your body often stems from an imbalance elsewhere. With that in mind, Bryant placed an extra emphasis on treating the root cause and not the effect. He often experienced problems in his ankles, which caused soreness in his knees, hips, and back. To prevent this from happening, Bryant spent a significant amount of time before each game ensuring that his ankles were activated and moving. Once he was relatively loose, he would begin stretching and "calibrating the cannon," doing more active, more range-of-motion exercises to get ready. Before he took any shots, Bryant would make sure his shoulder was sitting back correctly and not rotating forward (Bryant, 2018). Bryant continued to listen to his body and did everything in his power to ensure that when it was game time he was feeling at his best. To Bryant, letting his body recover was just as essential as training, titling this section of his book "Breakdown Is as Important as Setup" (Bryant, 2018). Immediately following each game Bryant implemented more work on his body. He called ice "the old reliable," because it was his status quo after every game and practice. He placed two bags of ice on the front and back of his knees and shoulder, while dipping both of his feet in an ice bucket for twenty minutes. This would help bring down the inflammation he experienced and kicked off Bryant's "wind-down" of today's work and jumpstart his "gear-up" for the next (Bryant, 2018). It appears that Bryant used this recovery phase to manage and cope with stress. Listening to his body and letting it dictate his daily health-promoting behaviors was central to both his preparation and recovery.

Bryant seemingly used the sport of basketball as a coping mechanism. Everything that it took to be great at basketball was appealingly therapeutic for Bryant, which included; workouts, watching film, studying the game, competing against others, and so forth.

A third, and arguably most critical domain that offers insight on Kobe Bryant and his life would be to evaluate his "mamba mentality," and how, from an intrapsychic domain, he established mental mechanisms of personality through motives and emotional intelligence. One construct in the intrapsychic domain of personality is The Need for Achievement, which refers to the desire to do better, to be successful, and to feel competent. People who display a high need for achievement cherish the process of being engaged in a challenging task and obtain satisfaction from either accomplishing the task or from the anticipation of accomplishing it (Larsen and Buss, 2018).

Kobe Bryant's mamba mentality is a powerful philosophy that aimed to inspire the next generation of athletes. In a news report by Leena Tailor (2020), Bryant explained this philosophy in his own words, "Mamba mentality means to be able to constantly try to be the best version of yourself… It's a constant quest to try to be better today than you were yesterday… Mamba mentality is all about focusing on the process and trusting in the hard work when it matters most." Kobe emphasized that hard work outweighs talent every time and continued to dive deeper into his mindset by adding, "Mamba mentality is about 4:00 a.m. workouts, doing more than the next guy and then trusting in the work you've put in when it's time to perform. Without studying, preparation and practice, you're leaving the outcome to fate. I don't do fate." The need for achievement appears to strongly correlate with Bryant's mamba mentality through the constant growth, and elimination of fate due to holding yourself personally accountable for the outcomes. One thing that Bryant has always been very vocal about was his lack of fear when it

came to basketball. He was never scared of missing, looking bad, or being embarrassed because

he always had the end result, the long game, in his mind. As a kid, Kobe worked tirelessly on

adding different elements to his game that helped make him a better player. In his book *Mamba*

Mentality: How I Play, Kobe explained that from the first time he picked up a basketball, he

wanted to be the best, specifically stating that "I had a constant craving, yearning, to improve

and be the best. I never needed any external forces to motivate me… I didn't need that extra push

to be great, though. From day one, I wanted to dominate" (Bryant, 2018). His motivation appears

to be found deep within himself and within the game of basketball. Kobe had a particular

mindset that he was going to figure out every player and know their game like it was his own.

And to do that, to figure those puzzles out, Kobe was willing to do way more than anyone else

was. Kobe's particular obsession about figuring out players began during his childhood. He

explained how much he enjoyed the enormous amount of time and energy he spent devouring

film, watching everything he could get his hands on. Believing that he learned the tendencies of

other players simply to get ahead of them would be misguided. He seemingly did it more out of

pure enjoyment than anything else. With that being said, grasping how this relates to his need for

achievement may entail a further evaluation. Kobe used the metaphor that "some people, after

all, enjoy looking at a watch; others are happier figuring out how the watch works" (Bryant,

2018). It seems that, for Kobe, this was his driving force that energized his behaviors. Kobe

framed each aspect of his life around developing his skills in order to be successful in basketball.

Figuring out players was the first step he took towards dominating them. Kobe loved and

cherished each one of the many challenges he encountered during his twenty seasons in the

NBA. He trained his mind just as hard as his body, which fueled his competence in basketball.

Kobe explained that the only way he was able to pick up details on the court was by training his

mind to do it off the court, focusing on every detail in his daily life. He stated that "By reading, by paying attention in class and in practice, by working, I strengthened my focus. By doing all of that, I strengthened my ability to be present and not have a wandering mind" (Bryant, 2018).

Another domain that offers important insight on Kobe Bryant and his life and how, from a cognitive-experiential domain, his perceptions, thoughts, feelings, desires, and conscious experiences have shaped his personality. Kobe Bryant has always been very vocal about these components, and through his book and what others have to say about him we can grasp a better understanding of the infamous mamba mentality. One theory within the cognitive-experiential domain is the Cognitive Social Learning Theory, which is an approach that emphasizes the cognitive and social processes whereby people learn to value and strive for certain goals over others. Bandura emphasized the active nature of human behavior, arguing "that people have intentions and forethought; they are reflective and can anticipate future events; they monitor their behavior and evaluate their own progress; plus, they learn by observing others" (Larsen and Buss, 2018).

One important concept within the Cognitive Social Theory is Self-efficacy, which refers to the belief that one can execute a specific course of action to achieve a goal (Larsen and Buss, 2018). Kobe Bryant displayed very high levels of self-efficacy, particularly during the peak of his career in 2003. According to Kobe, he truly believed that he was on a level that far surpassed every other athlete and further explained this belief in his book. Bryant talked about how there was nothing-emotionally, mentally, physically, strategically-anyone could do that season to stop him or his team (Bryant, 2018). His goal was stuck on winning championships for the Lakers, rather than acquiring individual accolades such as winning the most valuable player award. Bryant believed that he could accomplish this goal if the organization placed enough talent

around him. Bryant had a special desire towards going to battle for his team every game and

destroying any team that was in his way. Take, for instance, a major obstacle that stood in the

way of the Lakers championship was in 2008 when the Boston Celtics had acquired multiple all-

stars. Kobe spoke on this historic rivalry and stated that his mindset was always "they're in the

way and I have to win; I have to win this title. It didn't matter that they had three future Hall-of-

Famers… It didn't matter because the history books wouldn't reflect that. The only thing that

gets recorded is titles, and we had to fight our way through those guys and win one" (Bryant,

2018). One of the reasons why Kobe acquired such a high level of self-efficacy was due to the

influence of modeling, or by seeing others engage in the performance with positive results

(Larsen and Buss, 2018). Kobe loved to model his game around the all-time greats who came

before him, mentioning that by the time he got to the NBA he had already developed a short

learning curve. Meaning that Bryant could see something on the court, download it, and

implement it into his own game. He credits Bill Russell, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Magic Johnson,

Jerry West, and James Worthy for teaching him the lessons that gave him the edge over his

competitors (Bryant, 2018). Kobe seemingly thinks very highly of those mentors, those north

stars, those who directly and indirectly helped elevate his game by either observing them play or

being coached by them.

        The dispositional approach of the Five Factor Model provided a sufficient insight about

Kobe Bryant's personality. The data from his book and what others say about him can be

gathered to produce an estimate on where he lies within each of the five categories. This estimate

can then be used to further understand how Kobe Bryant's personality traits influenced his

development of health-promoting behaviors that can be reflected upon the Health Behavior

Model. The productive behaviors Bryant displayed can then be further examined to help interpret

their effects on his life, career, and health outcomes due to its involvement in stress management and coping. I believe the strongest domain and model to look at for Kobe Bryant would be to examine how his intrapsychic and personality are correlated, and how they have influenced his seemingly high-level need for achievement. A domain I think would have been intriguing to look at would have been the Social and Cultural Domain. Particularly, to examine the distinct aspects of his personality that align with his Italian culture, and to identify where specific American ideologies might clash with his Italian culture.

The Personality Profile Project allowed me to gather several interesting details about who Kobe Bryant is, expanding his label well beyond just an American professional basketball player. Working through this project showed me just how complex personality is. The six domains of personality display distinct purposes that, when put together, portray unique facets that are subjective to each individual. Despite Kobe Bryant being an incredible player, I think it is especially important to look at how his desire for the game of basketball influenced him to become a better player, husband, father, and the influential leader/mentor that he has taken since his retirement in 2016. Basketball allowed Kobe to find his purpose in life and provided him with opportunities most people only dream about. Basketball, in a way, gave him everything in life. He used his knowledge not only to get better for himself, but to teach those under him everything they need to know about what it takes to become a professional athlete. He and so many others inspire young athletes to always give it their best, whether it is in basketball, life, or even school. His unique childhood, moving from Philadelphia to Italy, proves that with the right headspace, anyone can make their dream a reality. Kobe Bryant provided the world with a very strong philosophy on life that inspires the next generation of athletes to put their head down and get to work. His legacy is left in this world through his mamba mentality.

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