Ethical Dilemma of Sport

FINAL

Sharon Kay Stoll, Ph.D.
Center for ETHICS*
University of Idaho

Jennifer M. Beller, Ph.D.
Educational Leadership and Counseling Psychology
Washington State University

1 ©2003 Sharon Kay Stoll, Ph.D. and Jennifer M. Beller, Center for ETHICS*, University of Idaho. Moscow, ID
Ethical Dilemmas in Sport

Introduction: Dilemma? Or No Dilemmas?

On fear of trepidation in to a world that has vast chasms and little illumination, this paper is not about “ethical dilemmas in sport”. From our pedagogical point of view, using ethical dilemmas to teach ethical conduct appears too often to be mired in hopeless and fruitless rhetoric as individuals typically get lost in the hubris of the issues rather than being able to identify and solve the ethical issue through a principled perspective. It is not that ethical dilemmas do not exist, for ethical dilemmas are as old as sport itself, or that ethical dilemmas could be useful in teaching ethics. The reality, from our point of view of over 40 years of teaching and researching sport ethics, is that, without additional ethical study, few folks learn anything from reading about or even studying ethical dilemmas - or - in the jargon of university academe, case studies.

The purpose of this paper is a two fold argument that: 1) learning ethical principles rather than studying unethical practice and the concomitant consequences should be the basis of studying ethics in sport and 2) better ethical education for all individuals involved in the athletic experience should be implemented, from the athlete to the president of the institution. It is clear

---


3Research at our Center for ETHICS* has been rather clear. Case studies in and of themselves have little merit in changing moral reasoning or moral development. Rather, intense study in personal morality and development of clear personal goals are imperative, combined with reflection, reading, writing, and further reflection. For further information on this topic see: Thomas Lickona (1990), Beller, J. M. & Stoll, S., (1993, 1994, 1995),, Shields, D. & Bredemeier, B. (1994).
that the present educational system has not prepared the athlete, the coach, or the college and university administrator about the problem of athletic misconduct or financial mis-management at universities and colleges, for ethical dilemmas abound. Such is not a new or novel condition for at the very first collegiate athletic event between Harvard and Yale, cheating and unethical misconduct occurred.⁴ One hundred and fifty plus years later, cheating still occurs and unethical violations or behaviors are the status quo of collegiate sport. Thus, to discuss ethical dilemmas seems rather fruitless, for we could spend a lifetime, and reams of paper arguing against cheating and unethical practice by discussing the practice - in which the story and outcome is always about the same.

Rules exist and individuals, i.e., administrators, coaches, fans, and athletes, knowingly violate the rules but argue that either they did not know or rationalize that their action was misunderstood. The sordid story usually ends in contrite behaviors, good moral intentions⁵ to solve the problem, but wholly naive expectations to mitigate the greater problem. That is: someone is caught, she is sorry and says “people make mistakes,” she is punished, everyone involved is embarrassed, administrative rhetoric is accusatory but contrite, people resign, the athletic program suffers, the program then appears to be clean for a while, new people come in to start the program again, and then the cycle repeats itself, i.e., the new people suffer the same inabilities as the former “cheaters” to “be ethical”. A case in point is found in any of the 15+

---

⁴It was a boat race held at a resort, hundreds of miles from either school. The teams were sponsored by a railroad superintendent who saw a good commercial venture. He supplied the teams with free travel on his train to the resort. The teams were there a week ahead of time, in which vast quantities of beer was consumed. When the competition finally occurred, both teams had ringers - boatmen who attended no college. See Smith, R. A. (1990).

⁵See A. Heschel, (1965). Heschel addresses throughout this work the magnitude of
NCAA signature schools who have been sanctioned twice or three times since 1992 by the NCAA for violations of rules and are on probation, or some variation of the above: University of Alabama, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Baylor, New Mexico State, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, and so forth.\(^6\)

We, the authors, argue that the academic society involved in the study of sport has missed the whole point: few folks learn anything from reading about or even studying ethical dilemmas - or - in the jargon of university academe, case studies\(^7\). For case studies miss the focus. The true focus of ethical education should be on the “flawed-ness” of our own humanity. The true dilemma lies in the following conditions: - (1) cheaters will always be with us, (2) all of us will cheat or be tempted to cheat, (3) not one human is above cheating, (4) can we ever expect better behavior, and (5) and if so, what conditions will support better ethical behavior? Cheating is symptomatic of a greater malaise - the lack of character education within society.

Cynic or Teacher?

The above comments sound a bit cynical, but such is not the case. The reality is: cheating and ethical violations occur and - we are all guilty. It does not matter how righteous we are, we probably cheat or have cheated. How so? Cheating per se is about violating or not holding to an honor bound promise that we make. That is, we make many promises to follow the rules, “good” intentions that poorly thought out, and poorly directed.

\(^6\)http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/sports/rankings/sanctions.htm

\(^7\)Research at our Center for ETHICS* has been rather clear. Case studies in and of themselves have little merit in changing moral reasoning or moral development. Rather, intense study in personal morality and development of clear personal goals are imperative, combined with reflection, reading, writing, and further reflection. For further information on this topic see: Lickona, T. (1990), Beller, J. M, & Stoll, S., (1993, 1994, 1995), Shields, D. & Bredemeier, B. (1994).
whether the rules are mandated and regulated by the state (i.e., speed laws), or an organization (the NCAA rules), or by an institution (i.e., scientific conduct guidelines). If we knowingly violate those rules, we are cheating.

Promise keeping is the key to it all and is premised on a set of principles – or first rules – that we value and hold dear. These first rules stand by themselves and are not based on consequences and include the moral values of justice, beneficence, responsibility, and honesty, or in simpler terms, promise keeping. All of us have personal demons that we try to control by making promises. Most times, we keep those promises - but many times we do not. We make a promise to follow some sort of path or rule, then we knowingly choose not to keep our promise by weighing and/or justifying the consequences. Most of these promise violations are somewhat harmless and may seem to be trivial. For example, suppose you make a promise to your doctor that you will not eat chocolate because of the health problems it causes you, and then as you pass the candy store you buy a pound package of white chocolate kisses. You justify your action with some sort of intellectual two step - “I really didn’t break my word, because I bought white chocolate, which really isn’t chocolate after all”. Right...except it is cheating - You broke a promise. The chocolate promise appears to be benign and trivial. However, in ethical conduct and moral practice the trivial often defines our moral character. The little things help establish ethical behavior, for a history of little trivial things develop a pattern of moral justification, which later causes great harm. A trivial action which seems to cause no harm, may indeed cause great harm - to the reasoning and principled thinking process as well as to how others view your

---

8First rules - meaning more important than any other rules. First rules should govern all ethical decision making. See: Fox and DeMarco, (1990) and Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, (2002).
moral actions. And today, promise keeping or not promise keeping is usually accompanied by moral “two stepping”.

A case in point is the comparison between Coach John Wooden and Coach Dennis Erickson. One took the issue of promise keeping as a spiritual imperative, the other dismissed it as not being expected.

John Wooden, the famous basketball coach at UCLA who won more collegiate basketball titles, discusses the importance of making promises in his latest book, “Wooden”. 9

John Wooden had a successful career as a high school coach, and was being offered excellent collegiate positions. He had been contacted by UCLA to become their basketball coach and he was also contacted by the University of Minnesota.

Wooden’s first choice was Minnesota, because his wife wanted to stay close to family in the Midwest US. Wooden interviewed at both places and was upfront with both schools about his dealings with the other. UCLA made the better offer. But, Wooden still wanted to go with Minnesota. He told Minnesota what he needed, and the individual who was doing the negotiations could not formalize the changes. He needed more time, hence the deal with Minnesota couldn’t be finalized. UCLA was pushing Wooden to sign a contract, finally, Wooden told UCLA, if I don’t hear from Minnesota by 5 p.m on a specific date, I’ll sign your contract.

The day came and at 5 p.m., no word from Minnesota. Wooden immediately called UCLA and told them he would accept their offer.

An hour later, Minnesota called and gave him all of the conditions he requested, plus

more. They had tried to call him the entire day, but an ice storm in Minnesota had downed all of the lines. The first they were able to get through was at 6 p.m.

Wooden turned down Minnesota and took the UCLA job. His simple statement was, “I had to - I had given my word.” For Wooden, his character was who he was, as is this simple statement by him: ….“I am just a common man who is true to his beliefs”.

Compare Wooden’s story with the following about Dennis Erickson as told by Mike Pattison10

Dennis Erickson ranks as the seventh winningest Division 1-A active college head coach in the nation with a winning percentage of .722, and is ninth for total victories with 136.

Erickson was the head coach at Washington State University, Pullman, WA, in 1988 and was in the middle of recruiting season. One of the local kids, Michael J. Pattison, in Moscow, Idaho – just eight miles across the Washington-Idaho border was an outstanding high school quarterback who was being heavily recruited by University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University, as well as, Washington State University.

On Friday before the final day of signing, rumors were flying in the community that Erickson was being considered for the next head coaching job at Miami.

On Saturday, Erickson was in the living room of Mike’s parents who were very leery of their son attending Washington State University. They thought that Mike could get a better education at Berkeley, Mike’s first choice for an engineering degree. However, Erickson was known as a quarterback’s coach and Mike really wanted to play and learn under someone of his quality.

The family asked Erickson numerous times, “Will you be the coach at WSU next year?”

Erickson gave them his word that he would be at WSU the next year and Mike would be a starting quarterback for WSU. Mike signed his letter of intent that evening and was on his way to WSU.

The next afternoon, Erickson announced on national television that he had made a deal with Miami to be their head coach. When

10 Mike Pattison, the father of Mike Pattison, Jr., lives in Moscow, Idaho.
confronted with the promises that he had made to the WSU recruits, Erickson answered that it was a difficult decision but that he had to consider his family and his responsibilities to them. The amount of money to be earned was more important than the promise to the Pattisons.

At the time, NCAA rules did not permit a player to rescind a recruiting letter without losing a year of eligibility, Mike Pattison was bound for WSU. His father later said that though his wife was irate with Erickson’s behavior, it probably all turned out okay. Mike did get to play quarterback a few times during the career of Drew Bledsoe at WSU. Mike received a great education; he later studied law and today is a practicing attorney in Moscow, Idaho.

**Intellectual Two Steps - Moral Justification**

The intellectual two step (moral justification) causes many of the ethical dilemmas that occur in athletic programs. \(^{11}\) Basically, the two step stems from three different thought processes: (1) the unethical action was really ethical, i.e., muddy the waters and make the wrong look like a right, i.e., (2) the unethical action was a non-issue in the sense that the action caused no harm to another individual or was unseen, i.e., no foul, no harm, see above. (3) A rule was violated but the amount of good accomplished overshadowed the small amount of harm that occurred, i.e., the ends justify the means. Many of these problems arise because individuals, as Bertrand Russell \(^{12}\) stated, just do not think, rather they react and deal with the consequences afterwards, which is a direct result of limited to no principled thinking education.

**The Unethical Action Was Really Ethical (Muddy the Waters)**

This form of moral justification is denying that any unethical action occurred, because the action did not exactly match the definition of cheating in the particular case. For example, the chocolate eater did not really eat chocolate, because white chocolate is not chocolate, therefore the promise was not violated and no cheating occurred. The logic resides in the argument that cheating only occurs if the behavior

\(^{11}\) Bandura (1977) has discussed moral justification in great detail. Bandura’s point was about actually violating physically and emotionally others. My example above moral rationalization is about how intellectual people use intellect to convince themselves that what they are doing is really a good thing.

\(^{12}\) Actually the quote is, “Many people would sooner die than think; In fact, they do”, and, “So I had supposed that intellectuals frequently loved truth, but I found here again that not ten per cent of them prefer truth...” See, Russell, (1955).
coincides directly to a one to one ratio of the exact wording used in the promise. Taken further, this is the typical and false belief that rules or laws can be formulated to define and proscribe ethical practice in each and every case. Therefore a rule is written in a one to one ratio to the possible infraction with individuals typically treating rules as synonymous with principles.\textsuperscript{13}

The \textit{NCAA Division I Manual} \textsuperscript{14} is such an instrument. Rules are written in a retroactive fashion to address a practice that is found to be unethical. Each year more rules are written to cover the problems that occur. One of the results of such a practice, more rules and more complicated rules books, is each institution needs (1) compliance officers to monitor coaches and athletes, and (2) athletic directors with law degrees to interpret the rules. Rules, unfortunately, cannot accomplish the task at hand, for it is impossible to write a rule for every possible unethical action. The final interpretation for the athlete, coach, and often the administrator is that the moral view of the NCAA is impossible to follow, and thus begins the intellectual two step that supports the following mind set: (1) If there is no rule against the practice, then the practice must be ethical and/or (2) The rule does not exactly say we can not do it.

\textbf{The Unethical Action was Trivial, and No One Saw Me - No Foul, No Harm}

Often individuals believe that just as in the case of the chocolate cheater, if no harm occurred to another individual by violating a promise and/or if no one saw the infraction, then the action was acceptable. The logic is something like this: the action is good, i.e., the chocolate tastes good, so why not violate the promise? It will only happen this one time, and no one saw me.

However, the truth of the matter is that such logic has a great deal to do with how we value ethical promises and how we will actually carry them out.\textsuperscript{15} Promise keeping is based on the premise that we (1) made the promise, (2) that we value the promise, and (3) that we carry out the promise. It DOES NOT matter if anyone else ever knows that we did or did not keep the promise. And, it DOES NOT matter how trivial, unimportant, unsophisticated the promise. The reality is that higher levels of moral development are dependent on “doing the right” for its own

---

\textsuperscript{13}Principles predate rules. Principles are written to proscribe personal behavior, and certain First Rules should act as guides to behavior. See: Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, (2002).

\textsuperscript{14}As well as Division II and Division II Manuals.

\textsuperscript{15}Lickona (1993) does a fine analyses of the three different variables that affect moral development and moral action. He calls them knowing, valuing, and doing. We must know the right, we must value the right, and then we must make a habit of doing the right.
sake, not because people watch us do the right. Character is tied to anonymous ethical action - in this case - to follow through on promise keeping, even when no one else ever sees or knows that we did.

The “ethics is only when you get caught” mentality is common reasoning in athletics. No foul, no harm. It is the perspective that wrong only occurs if the wrong is caught by an official, an administrator, a coach, and so on. Such little regard for promise keeping follows through in all that we do, and results in making poor decisions that affects others. Examples of such poor principled thinking can be found daily on the sport page as athletes, coaches, and administrators violate a professional trust, break training rules, break contracts, break agreements, ad infinitum. A good specific example is the following: A football player was once asked if holding is a violation, the player responded, “Only if the referee sees it.” The player was then given this scenario: “Let us assume that you have a girl friend. And let us assume that the two of you have made a commitment to one another. Let us also assume that she has an affair with another player; and, let us assume that you never find out that the affair occurred. Based on your logic about holding, can we assume then that the affair never happened?” Obviously, the player thought the logic didn’t apply to the affair and his girl friend.

**Good Over Shadows Harm**

This form of moral justification is probably the classic “slippery slope” of the intellectual two step. The argument is thus. Rules are usually good, because rules give us direction on how we should act. However, rules can be bad if the rules violate people, or if the rules do more harm than good. The moral justification is based on a convoluted sense of utilitarian ethics, i.e., measuring the amount of good done in relation to the amount of harm. The problem with weighing harm, is how much harm is permissible in relation to the amount of good done? In the chocolate eater’s case, the harm is rationalized that white chocolate is not chocolate, which is true, but the nutritional elements in white chocolate may do the same amount of harm, i.e., cholesterol and sugar. Or the chocolate eater may rationalize that the little bit of harm in not

---

16 Slippery Slope, using flawed arguments and more flawed arguments to hold a tenuous position. Arguing without fact or clear thought to support fallacious reasoning.

17 Convoluted in the sense how does one measure harm? William K. Frankena (1973) in his seminal text, *Ethics*, succinctly notes that the problem with utilitarian ethics is deciding how much harm is acceptable. What percentage of harm is acceptable? Is 99% good better than the
keeping the promise about eating chocolate will never be manifested, because no one will know that the promise was broken.

In most cases, weighing harm and good is the perception that the good done far outweighs the harm. That is, if the good helps others then the little bit of harm done is acceptable. The chocolate eater’s case won’t apply because the chocolate eater is eating for self appeasement, which is impossible to justify on the basis of good for others. Ethical egoism, or doing the good only for one’s betterment, is not about ethics but about hedonism. Ethics is NOT about what is good for me, or what pleasures me, or what I deserve. Ethics is about how we are motivated, how we are intentional, and how we act toward others. We must remember to weigh the distribution of harm - to good is a serious moral reasoning problem. The process most times is flawed and the outcome could easily violate principles, individuals, and/or the system.

In athletics, breaking rules based on the notion of doing good is a rather standard case. Examples are endless: violating eligibility rules to admit athletes with sub-standard academic credentials, writing papers for athletes (plagiarism), mitigating social and criminal actions with a “they just made a mistake” rational and so forth. The argument is: the athlete is a really good kid, they need a little help, and being at the University is a good thing for the students, so why not just overlook a rule and help them out?

The intellectual two step occurs, we believe, because as learned people we actually misunderstand or dis-value the process of moral development and moral education. As a society, we have been seduced into a Post-Modernistic philosophy that (1) multiculturalism denies a universal standard of ethics, (2) self gratification is more important than responsibility to others, and (3) because all people make mistakes, we have no right to judge. Doing good ethics is recognizing relativistic thought, “...becoming sensitive to moral issues, respecting and loving

18 Frankena also offers a very good discussion on ethical egoism and hedonism, self pleasure seeking. Basically ethical egoism is deciding issues on what’s in it for me, and hedonism is making decisions based on my personal pleasure. The chocolate eater is caught up in the pleasure of eating chocolate and attempts to justify breaking promises through the need for self fulfillment.

19 Frankena (1973) discusses the theory of mixed deontic ethics in which principles can function with utilitarian distribution of good. Frankena stresses the importance of principles and how those principles should be applied in a just distribution process.

20 The argument holds that multiculturalism cannot support one standard, therefore many standards must co-exist, which results in no one standard which results in cultural relativism as a
oneself, looking for win-win solutions, respecting and loving your craft, and searching for moral excellence” (Kretchmar, 1994, p. 237-238).

To gain these skills demands active, continuing, life-long education for all. Moral development is not innate by race or class, or education or position. There is a mystical belief that formal ethics education, i.e., seminars, discussions, lectures, is only for people who have problems or did not come from the “right” education or background. “They apparently weren’t raised in a good home.” “People who are educated know the right thing to do.” Or, “Obviously, they don’t know what is right, look where they live.” “We don’t need ethics education because it is embedded in the parameters of the project, and a good leader will always be ethical and always ensure ethical actions of his/her followers.” These stereotypical comments intimate that if one is white, educated, bright, a professional, and from the right side of the tracks, then one “knows” what is right - and one will not suffer from the malaise of cheating or dishonesty. Such is not reality.

A Case in Point

This past year, 2003, four college presidents - who are suppose to know the right - found themselves in ethical quandaries by knowingly violating NCAA rules or mismanaging some form of athletic business within their institution. 21 All four matched our stereotypical population of folks who know better. Unfortunately, they did not know the right - or they were doing that proverbial intellectual two step. In two of the cases, outright cheating occurred when a president skirted the rules of his own organization - and permitted an ineligible player to attend their institution. One president argued that he “...had good intentions, but the NCAA didn’t see it that way” 22. In the other two cases, the president hired a coach with a long history of unethical conduct. To their credit, the ethical lapse was not as great as the former two cases, but they did suffer from the stereotypical arrogance that “in the right environment the coach would do the right thing”. A typical reasoning pattern is, “This coach is a really great guy; you can’t help but like him. And in the right environment, he would be monitored and he would do the ‘right thing’

The Error of Arrogance

statement of ethical theory. See Fox & DeMarco (1990).

Unfortunately, most of us are confused about “the right thing” most of the time—college presidents included. Expediency, another other type of two step, befuddles all of us. We have not been educated to think morally—rather we are educated to think globally. We have not been trained to value the right—rather we have been trained to value efficiency. We have not been immersed in a society that values the right—rather we are immersed in a society that values compromise. We are mortals who suffer all the vulgarities of being moral and immoral. That is why, (1) moral education, moral discussion, and moral seminars are needed at all levels of business enterprise and should be held at the minimal of every other month, including at the NCAA, (2) moral criteria should be a part of every business vision and mission, and (3) moral behavior should be supported, expected and mandated throughout the community, whether it is business or athletics.

Teaching ethics

Of course, to state that ethics can be taught and should be taught to administrators, coaches, and even college presidents causes unrest. Moral education for students or athletes—may be acceptable, but for administrators? Yes! For all administrators— for the error of arrogance is to see oneself above the immorality of self. We all need constant education and reminders of the moral life. Moral development and moral behavior is not a finished project. Moral education is a lifelong endeavor. We are not necessarily born moral or immoral and morality does not mysteriously occur in childhood and stay rooted in our psyches for life. Rather, all of us grow, mature, and develop or do not develop morally through our education and environment and we are highly affected by moral or immoral role models. Currently, the professional world completely misunderstands the point that moral development is a lifelong endeavor.

Moral Education is a combined lifelong informal and formal process of learning in which our own moral sense, personal values, and system of knowing about morality and moral issues influences our actual doing. All of us are inculcated by our life’s experiences and the process culminates in developing what is otherwise known as our moral character, i.e., moral development. No specific period of time is known as the end line of character development, though if left unchallenged moral character can become static and in the right conditions lost in a vacuum.

---

However, with challenges to our value systems through what we call moral reasoning, a psychological dissonance occurs in which we begin to ponder about our own personal morality, even our professional ethics, and our social responsibility. It is at this juncture, that all of us need continual education in morality and ethics. There is no end line for moral education, and the more stressful the profession, the more stressful, the more competitive the vocation, the more one needs active education in ethics (Darley & Batson, 1973; Beller & Stoll, S.K, 1995; Penny & Priest, 1990; Priest & Krause, 1999; Priest & Krause, 1993).

The Teaching and Learning of Ethics

All of us need reflection and education about morality. Of course, to state that ethics can be taught and should be taught even to administrators, coaches, and even college presidents causes unrest. For the usual and very tired question is: Can we teach ethics? Should morality be taught through an educational program?

The question is rather remarkable in and of itself. For to ask the question, is to ask if humans can be taught to value life, to value honor, to value decency, to value codes of conduct, to value honesty, and to value justice? Can humans be taught to take others into consideration before they act? If we honestly believe that ethics cannot be taught, or that individuals cannot be taught moral values, then the whole notion of education as ascribed by pedagogists from Socrates through Goodlad is a lie, a farce. For to say that ethics cannot be taught is

---

23 See schematic attached at end of article.
24 Piper, Gentile, and Parks (1993) describe the difficulties with teaching ethics at a professional school. An important read for anyone who truly wants to “teach” ethics in the classroom and the barriers that will be met.
25 Socrates is self explanatory in that all western theory of ethics and reasoning begin in the writings of Socrates. John Goodlad is the contemporary educational writer of this generation who has written often and much about the importance of thinking and reasoning. John Goodlad is professor of education and director of the Center for Educational Renewal at the University of Washington in Seattle. Education, according to Goodlad should cultivate the sensibilities and the sensitivities of the individual at the highest possible level. That's what it's all about. We want people to be sensitive to the world around them; we want them to have the sensibilities that make
to believe that goodness and decency cannot be learned. Hence, humankind is beyond help and humans can only react to avarice, violence, debauchery, and indecency. Yet this is not the case, for ethics can be taught and people can learn to care, to share, to give, and to love.

Perhaps the question is not if ethics can be taught, but rather whose ethics should be taught? This question rests in fear of religious or political ideologies being forced on unsuspecting individuals. Critics argue that teaching ethics is about teaching individuals to parrot a prescribed religious or political philosophy, in which the human ability to think and reason becomes a programmed “brain washed” response.

However, such also is not the case. The process of teaching ethics is about inspiring thought and giving tools to make difficult moral decisions - i.e., moral reasoning. To teach moral reasoning is to offer the ability to critically assess the importance of moral values and to be able to make moral decisions based on a clear “thought out” philosophy of what is right and necessary in relation to both professional and societal principles, laws, and common practice.

The teaching of moral reasoning is about helping others develop a “thought out” world view in which one questions one’s role, purpose, and responsibility to others. Moral reasoning pedagogy is directed toward reading, writing, and reflecting on personal values, social constructs, and global theories of honesty, fair play, respect, responsibility, and decency toward others. Specifically, the purpose of moral reasoning is to aid in developing a coherent philosophic base of values and ethical conduct. As individuals develop this philosophic base, they learn the skills of good argumentation and reasoning. Specifically, they ask questions such as: What do they believe about honesty, justice, responsibility, and beneficience? How do those beliefs function globally as well as locally? What skills do they have to make ethical decisions using their value structure in the marketplace, the business place, and in the home? How can they improve those skills to meet and address the difficult ethical decisions of life?

Does the teaching of moral reasoning result in an ethical individual?

it possible for them to recognize the elements of phenomena that need to be dealt with in their lives. We need for them to be sensitive to one another, so they'll have successful relationships with others. It is developing responsible individuals whose individuality is molded in their culture. The school needs to provide that opportunity for interacting. It's entirely a personal thing. It's entirely an individual thing done in groups.
No, not completely or totally. The learning of personal morality and the practice of personal ethics is a greater, multi-faceted learned experience, which is affected by the environment around us and the role models who influence us. Moral reasoning must be in place for consistent moral action to occur, as well as, other factors for moral education to occur.

Moral education/character education refers to the deliberate and intentional activity of cultivating, modeling, and teaching moral growth and moral judgment. The resultant purpose of this deliberate and intentional activity is to build habitual patterns in which we have a willing disposition to act upon moral judgment. In other words, moral education is about how one garners the ability to not only form moral judgments but also to have the courage to act upon what one has learned. Moral judgment is only useful if it can be translated into appropriate moral action, or as McIntosh in his 1979 work said,

27 The morally educated person is expected not only to be able to make moral judgments but act upon them. The moral life necessitates a host of personal dispositions. The moral person must think the issue through to the limits of his capacity but if morally right action is to occur the person must be disposed to act on his moral judgment (p. 167).

Environment and Role Models

Once, we have the moral reasoning skills and once we have in place a long term educational enterprise in which we challenge ourselves through seminars and education, we need to consider the environment in which we reside, both work and at home.

We are always piqued by individuals who argue that what they do at work, does not define who they are as people. How is that? We are who we are which is our past and present experiences combined. And these combination of experiences affect our character and our future actions. Our lived environment contains all of our life’s experiences from our birth to our present. Our first environmental influence is from our immediate families. We are indirectly educated through our family traditions, family values, religious training, and family history. Our next environment experience comes from school, work, or play. We learn from what our peer group practices, from the values of the group, and from

---

26 According to Kohlberg (1984), moral education is the encouragement of a capacity for moral judgment.

27 For a fine review of McIntosh and an excellent discussion of sport, ethics, and education, see Arnold, 1997).
watching what the group does. The environment also instructs us through the greater societal norms, values, and actions. Today our sport influences are highly affected by media presentation, i.e., television, internet, movies, and newsprint. These environmental experiences directly affect what we believe, and what we tolerate or do not tolerate. The work environment is who we are - and that environment defines in a great definitive way our character. Hence, it is imperative that the work environment is a place of character and honor. For any less, we will be pulled into the chasm or unethical conduct and immoral behavior.

**Modeling.**

Significant people in our lives serve as role models for us. As we serve as role models for others. We learn by not only hearing what these important people say but also through their nonverbal instruction, their gestures, facial expressions and body language. Any person can serve as a role model and can teach others through their actions, words, and behaviors. The character of our role model choice reflects on each of us, and the more powerful job position that individual holds, the more we will be swayed to follow their conduct. Such is the argument for people of character in positions of authority. However, the reality is all people in role models positions are human, and can, do, or will suffer character lapses. The point here is that just because an individual holds a position of power, does not equate to automatic knowledge of “the right thing to do”. And, all individuals in such positions need constant ethical education, reflection, and supervision, and challenge from others.

A few years ago, we had a group of football players in a long term study in moral reasoning. The athletes had numerous classes in moral reasoning and ethics and had scored on high on moral reasoning inventories. They “knew” the right and wrong of action on the playing field. Before one of their largest rivalries, the group was discussing moral action on the field of play. The players made a “covenant” to follow ethical principles, no fights, no dirty play, no taunting during the big game. Saturday the game was televised and the professor was watching. One of her “class” leaders, made a touchdown and on television replay ran down the opponents sideline, giving them the third “finger” salute to celebrate his accomplishment. When next the players met the professor, the prof asked the player what was that action on the sidelines after the touchdown. The player raised his index finger and said, “We’re number one!”. The prof said, “Chris I saw the play and I distinctly know the difference between the first finger and the third finger in giving a gesture.” The player paused and said, “But doc, it felt so good! I knew better, but it felt so good!” And that is the crux of doing “good” in ethical conduct - the knowing versus the doing. The environmental forces in sport
today do not support ethical action, and thus the challenge will continue to be an uphill battle - to combine education with good role models and in a supporting ethical environment.

28Ethical Role Models, Environment, and Education - The True Dilemma

Hence the issue is not totally about studying ethical issues or case studies, rather the greater dilemma is facing reality - we are mortal and we will fail - unless - we understand that an ethical sporting environment, whether it be the sport field, the coach’s office, the boardroom, or the president’s suite, is dependent upon an ethical vision.

The vision and practice is predicated on: (1) moral education, moral discussion, and moral seminars at all levels of business enterprise and should be held at the minimal of every other month, including the NCAA, (2) moral criteria should be a part of every business vision and mission, and (3) moral behavior should be supported, expected and mandated throughout the community, whether it is business or athletics.

References:


28For a more inclusive discussion see: Stoll, (2002) and Beller,(2002).


Stoll, S. (2002). “*Can ethics be taught?*” Center for ETHICS*, University of Idaho.


Figure 1: A Schematic of the Process of Character Education from Learning to Doing.

A Schematic of the process of character education from learning to doing.

Learning Personal Character
- Past & Present Experiences...
- Family, Friends, Teachers...
- Moral Instruction, Moral Reasoning...

Informal Learning
- Environment

Formal Instruction
- Modeling
- Cognitive Dissonance

Character Education
- Valuing
- Knowing
- Doing

The Triad of Character Development*

*See, T. Lickona, Educating for Character

Copyright 1994, Sharon Kay Stoll, Ph.D.
Center for ETHICS *