Moral Development in a Win at All Cost Society: An Examination of Moral Knowing Development in 9th Grade Athletes

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The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the degree to which participating in strategic intervention workshops affected the level of moral knowing of 111 9th grade athletes. Results from the Rudd-Stoll-Beller-Hahm (RSBH) Value Judgment Inventory were utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of one program. Findings and conclusions are presented on the moral knowing, social character, and moral character of workshop participants versus students who did not attend workshops. Findings suggest that explicit training had a positive impact on the moral knowing of athletes who attended the strategic intervention workshops. Conversely, there was no statistically significant difference in social and moral character components between workshop attendees and non-attendees.

Keywords: Morality, Educationally Based Athletics, Moral Knowing, Moral Development in Education

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While the development of an adolescent's moral decision-making process is often established in the home, schools also play a significant role. In many cases, this development takes place in a school's athletic program. This is particularly important considering that 53% of the 14.8 million high school students participated in some form of athletics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016; National Federation of High School Sports, 2015). These high participation rates are an opportunity for educational leaders to counteract the win at all cost mentality that is pervasive in sports culture (Ruud, 2005). Given this information, it is incumbent upon educational leaders to provide athletes with effective programs that assist with their moral development.

Increasingly, schools are called on to provide an education that attends to the academic and social development of students (deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995; Best, 2000). One component of social development is moral development. A common belief is that sports can provide opportunities for personal growth and social development (Ewing, 1997). However, recent research has suggested there is a growing trend to the contrary. Researchers have found that student-athletes engaged in cheating, trying to injure opponents, arguing with officials, and poor sportsmanship (Shields, Bredemeier, LaVoi, & Power, 2005; Martin, Gould, Ewing, 2017). Due to the nature of competition in sport, antisocial behavior may be encouraged if coaches, parents, or athletes value winning above sportsmanship and fair play (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). Kvalnes and Hemmestad (2010) suggest that negative trends in the moral development of athletes could be attributed to the moral structures surrounding athletics. These structures have athletes caught between a rules-based approach where moral action is limited to the stated rules and an Aristotelian approach, which honors sportsmanship and the intent of the rules. By having a rules-based approach in athletics, organizations can create a loophole mentality (Kvalnes and Hemmestad, 2010). Findings from Rudd, Stoll, Beller, and Hahm (2009) support these findings and note that the environment of athletics has not been supportive of teaching and modeling moral knowing, moral valuing, and moral action due to limited consequences for immoral behaviors in the sport environment. To counteract this growing trend, some researchers recommend exposing athletes to explicit morality training and researching interventions to ensure that youth sport is a positive environment for all participants (Turnnidge, Cote, & Hancock, 2014; Martin, Gould, and Ewing, 2015). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of one school's effort to provide such tools through targeted workshops focused on developing student-athletes' level of moral knowing.

Review of Literature

Moral Development

Leaders select and shape the formal curriculum of educational institutions. While formal character education programs are frequently utilized in schools, an opportunity exists for moral development utilizing sports. Brunelle, Danish, and Forneris (2007) defend the notion that positive moral experiences exist in athletics when the principles are taught, organized, managed, and led in a manner consistent with those principles. This aligns with Bailey's (2006) assertion that physical activities can support social skills and behaviors when the interactions between students and their teachers, parents, and coaches are positive. Conversely, Beller and Stoll (2004) provide evidence that athletics may have a negative effect on moral development, noting that athletes score lower than their non-athletes peers on moral development and moral reasoning scores for athletic populations steadily decline from ninth grade through university age, whereas scores for non-athletes tend to increase. Eitzen (1988) brought these competing forces together, discussing ethical principles that should guide sports along with the ethical dilemmas and structural sources that

exacerbate unethical behavior. These ethical dilemmas and sources are explained at a psychological level by Kavussanu (2007), who posits that moral thought and moral action can be explained by the work of Bandura (1991) on moral disengagement. Specifically, the eight mechanisms of disengagement include moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, distortion of consequences, dehumanization, and attribution of blame. To counteract moral disengagement and the negative forces which reinforce them, implicit and explicit approaches are useful (Turnnidge, Cote, & Hancock, 2014). One explicit approach to moral development is a formal curricular effort (O'Flaherty & McGarr, 2014).

The goal of moral development is to assist in the development of a person's moral decision-making process (Nucci & Turiel, 2009). Likona (1983) suggests the decision-making process has three concepts that should be understood: moral knowing, moral valuing, and moral action. Moral knowing is the understanding of moral issues and how to make moral decisions. Moral valuing is individualized and is based on self-control, empathy, and consciousness. Moral action is behavior based on moral knowing and valuing. Moral knowing directly effects moral valuing and moral actions (Kohlberg, 1969; Rest, 1979). This study examines the effectiveness of a formal curriculum and an implicit approach to improving moral decision making by focusing on moral knowing.

Strategic Intervention Background

The strategic intervention workshop utilized in this study approaches the development of adolescent sports culture by training leaders, parents, coaches, and athletes (Thompson, 2014). Triple-Impact Competitor Workshops are multimedia presentations that last between 45-60 minutes and focus on the moral development of athletes. During these interactive presentations, a certified trainer provides information on three general principles; the ELM Tree of Mastery, Filling Emotional Tanks, and Honoring the Game through ROOTS. The ELM Tree of Mastery stands for **E**ffort, **L**earning/ Improvement and bouncing back from **M**istakes (Thompson, 2011). This concept was developed based on Carol Dweck's (2006) concept of a growth mindset, which suggests that people can change their mental and physical abilities through effort. Learning is addressed in the strategic workshops via the WAG Approach. WAG stands for watch, ask and get coaching. This approach encourages athletes to adopt a "teachable spirit" (Thompson, 2011) through observation of those around them, asking questions and getting coaching when need be to assist them in the learning process. All three of these concepts are connected to the moral development of athletes. An athlete with a growth mindset will be more willing to hear and absorb the moral lessons that are taught.

The second principle that assists in the moral development of athletes is an approach to honoring the game through ROOTS (Thompson, 2011). The goal of using this acronym is to provide athletes a sense that it is their individual duty to honor the game by respecting the rules, their opponents, officials, their teammates and themselves. In essence, this workshop reinforces the Deontological philosophy that people have a duty to make the correct moral decision.

Methodology

This quantitative study evaluated the effectiveness of workshops given to secondary-level athletes.

Research Question

The overarching research question for this study was: What impact, if any, do strategic intervention workshops that focus on moral development have on moral knowing as measured by the Rudd-Stoll-Beller-Hahm (RSBH) Value Judgment Inventory?

1. To what degree, if any, was there a statistically significant change in moral knowing for ninth-graders who attended a strategic intervention workshop that focused on moral development?
2. To what degree, if any, was there a statistically significant change in the Social Character or Moral Character components for ninth-graders who attended a strategic intervention workshop that focused on moral development?

Population and Setting

The primary data used for this research was from a secondary school (Grades 9-12) in the southeast United States. This secondary school had 454 students (240 males and 214 females). For the school year 2015-2016, the tuition was $20,790.00. Twenty-two percent of the total student population received financial aid. The racial demographics of the total population were 74% Caucasian, 10% Latino, 8% Black, 8% Asian, Indian, or other.

Participants

The ninth-grade population in this study included 115 students, of which 111 participated in the survey. Therefore, the response rate for the survey was 96.5%. Fifty-two percent of the respondents were females, and 48% were males. Two respondents were removed from the study due to not passing the consistency check process during the ninth-grade pre-test. Eleven respondents did not participate fully (pre- and post-test), which led to their removal from the study. Ninety-eight (n=98) ninth-grade respondents' responses were analyzed for this research.

Data Collection

These data were collected as part of the school's efforts to assess the efficacy of a program that had been implemented for three years. Therefore, all students in the ninth grade were required to complete the instrument. One hundred and eleven ninth-graders were administered the RSBH instrument as a pre-test. During the pre-test, the group was split into two groups. Each group had forty-five minutes to complete the survey. Because there was no Wifii available for the pre-test, Scantron sheets were used to collect responses (A = Strongly Disagree, B = Disagree, C = Neutral, D = Agree and E = Strongly Agree); the demographic information was collected using a separate document, and the RSBH questions where provided via a printout of the instrument questions. To ensure both sheets (Scantron and Demographic Questionnaire) associated with each study participant were able to be tracked together, the students labeled each with the last three letters of their last name and the first three letters of their first name. The proctor read each question aloud and provided 10 seconds after the question had been read for the participant to indicate an answer on the Scantron sheet. After the initial administration of the instrument, all ninth-grade athletes (n = 30) participating in sports during that season participated in a workshop. A post-test for all ninth graders was then conducted one month after the pre-test (two weeks after the conclusion of the workshop). The post-test was conducted en masse utilizing the students' individually owned iPads. Students were provided a link to access a Google Form ®. This Google Form® contained the

demographic questions, as well as the questions from the instrument. Again, the proctor read each question and allowed 10 seconds for participants to indicate their answers on their iPad.

Instrument

The Rudd-Stoll-Beller-Hahm (RSBH) Value Judgment Inventory from The Center for Ethics at the University of Idaho was the instrument used to measure adolescent athletes' moral knowing for this research. The RSBH is designed to measure social and moral character within a sport context. RSBH and HBVCI measure cognitive knowing and do not predict or measure moral action (Rudd, Stoll, Beller, & Hahm, 2009). RSBH questions are derived from two components: The Hahm-Beller Value Choice Inventory- HBVCI (Hahm, Beller, & Stoll, 1989) and the Social Reasoning Index- SRI (Rudd, Mulane, & Stoll, 2010). Through a process of four pilot studies in 1999, the authors of the RSBH developed the 24-question instrument that was utilized for this study. There are 20 questions that are related to social and moral concepts, plus four consistency check questions. Questions 1-5 and 7-10 use a five-point Likert Scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree to achieve a final score on the RSBH. These questions are from the SRI and are based on the values of loyalty, teamwork, and self-sacrifice. The social component of the RSBH is about weighing a social value against a moral value and which is more important. Also, Questions 12-16, 18-22, and 24 on the RSBH use a five-point Likert Scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree to achieve a final score on HBVCI. The HBVCI is based on three values: honesty, responsibility, and justice. Because this instrument relies on the participants to self-identify which answer best describes their feelings on the question; consistency checks are aimed to ensure that the participant is fulling engaged and providing an honest answer. Question numbers 6, 11, 17, and 23 act as consistency checks (Rudd, Stoll, Beller, & Hahm, 2009). To ensure the internal consistency of the instrument's questions, Cronbach Alphas were conducted. The Cronbach alpha's for the social character index ($\alpha = .72$) and moral character index ($\alpha = .88$) met acceptable levels for validity, as defined by Kline (2013).

Data Analysis

Minitab statistical software and Google Sheets® were the primary software packages used to analyze the survey data in this research. The scores for each series of questions on the social index and moral index of the instrument ranged from 5-50 combining for a total score of 50-100 for the entire instrument. When interpreting the instrument scores, a higher mean score will indicate a more Deontic approach is used when making moral decisions.

The first step in data analysis began with the scoring of the consistency check questions in Google Sheets. The Google Sheet, with all student data, was formatted using the RSBH Scoring Rubric to determine if the students passed the consistency check process. After the consistency check answers were scored and a determination had been reached, whether to include the participant's answers in the study, the data of those students who passed the consistency checks were imported into Minitab for further analysis based on this study's research questions. Once the data was imported in Minitab, the data for both the ninth-grade were analyzed using a Welch Test followed by a Games-Howell Pairwise Comparison.

The Welch Test is a conservative style of ANOVA that assumes that each group's standard deviation (*SD*) is different as opposed to a traditional ANOVA that averages the *SD* of the multiple groups being compared. This statistical test was chosen due to the differing sample size of each group being compared and the ninth-grade group comparing more than two groups; athletes, students involved in service clubs, and students who reported not being involved in any extra-

curricular activity.

The statistical significance (α) was set at 5%. For each Welch Test conducted, the null hypothesis was (H_0) = all means are equal with the alternative hypothesis (H_1) = at least one mean is different. Once the p-Value was determined, a Games-Howell Pairwise Comparison was conducted to determine if the change was positive or negative in nature. The Games-Howell was utilized due to the *N* for each group varied in size.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include a small sample size, self-reported data, and additional factors that may influence moral decision making. Based on the small sample size, the results of this study may not be generalizable. Due to the self-reporting nature of the instrument, unknown biases may affect outcomes. Finally, additional contextual factors that may influence moral knowing, such as religious beliefs, socioeconomic background, other educational experiences, or other demographic characteristics were not controlled for in this study. As such, these untested variables may have influenced the moral knowing of respondents.

Results

The following section will report the findings of the Welch Test and subsequent post hoc procedure, Games-Howell Pairwise Comparison, for each of the research questions of this study. For each Welch Test conducted, the null hypothesis was (H_0) = all means are equal with the alternative hypothesis (H_1) = at least one mean is different. The significance level (α) was 0.05.

Research Question 1

The first research question guiding this study was: To what degree, if any, was there a statistically significant change in moral knowing for ninth- graders that attended a strategic intervention workshop that focused on moral development? To answer this research question, a Welch Test analysis of variance of the mean difference between the pre and post instrument scores of ninth grade athletes, non-athletes, and service club participants took place to determine if there were any differences between the mean scores of the three groups. Results of this ANOVA can be seen in Table 1. With a $F(2, 56.543) = 5.340$ and $p = 0.007$, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was statistically significant evidence that the mean score is different among the groups.

Table 1: Welch Test analysis of variance of the mean difference between the pre and post instrument scores of ninth grade athletes, non-athletes, and service club participants.

Source	DF Number	DF Den	F-Value	P-Value
9th Pre and Post All	2	56.543	5.340	0.007*

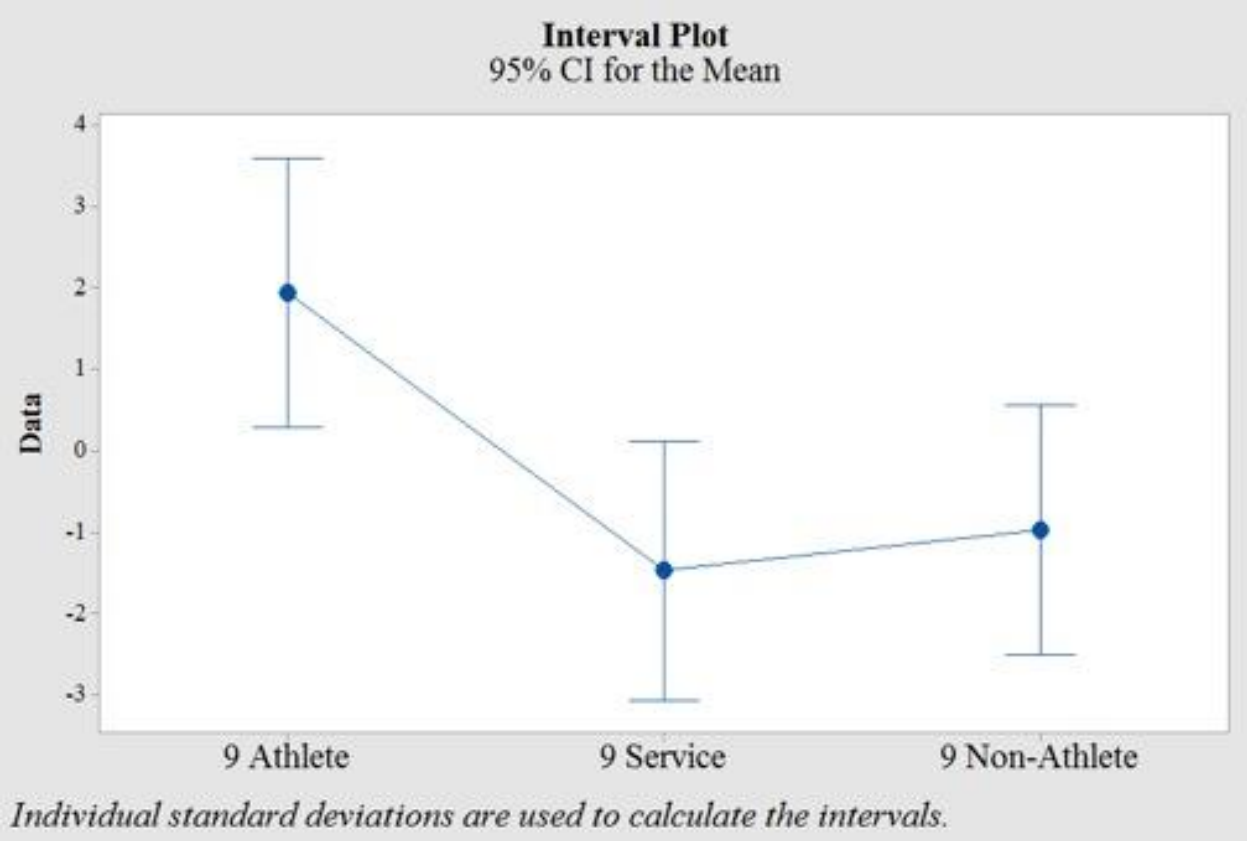
* Denotes a statistically significant difference at .05.

After determining the results of the ANOVA, a Games-Howell Pairwise Comparison of the mean difference between the pre and post instrument scores of ninth grade athletes, non-

athletes, and service club participants took place to determine which groups, in fact, differed between pre and post-test scores. Results of this post hoc procedure can be found in Table 2 and in Graph 1. The group that included athletes (n = 30) (M = 1.933, SD = 4.425) who attended a workshop had a positive difference in mean scores from pre-test to post-test, while the other two groups, service club members (n = 21) (M = -1.476, SD = 5.231) and non-athletes (n =47) (M = -0.979, SD = 3.487) had lower scores on average.

Table 2: Games-Howell Pairwise Comparison of the mean difference between the pre and post instrument scores of ninth grade athletes, non-athletes, and service club participants.

Factor	*n*	Mean	SD	Grouping
9th All Athlete	30	1.933	4.425	Attended workshop.
9th All Service	21	-1.476	5.231	Did not attend workshop.
9th All Non-Athlete	47	-0.979	3.487	Did not attend workshop.



Graph 1: Mean difference of all three ninth-grade groups' pre and post-test scores.

Research Question 2

The second research question was: To what degree, if any, was there a statistically significant change in the Social Character or Moral Character components for ninth graders that attended a strategic intervention workshop that focused on moral development? To answer this research h question, a Welch Test analysis of variance of the ninth-grade mean difference between the pre and post-test results of the social character index questions and moral index questions took place

to determine if there was a statistically significant difference among the ninth-grade mean scores on the two series of questions. Results of this ANOVA can be seen in Table 4 (Social Index Questions) and Table 5 (Moral Index Questions). With a $F(2, 56.635) = 0.220$ and $p = 0.807$, the null hypothesis was not rejected thus there was no statistically significant evidence that the mean scores on the social index questions is different among the groups. With a $F(2, 54.2141) = 1.650$ and $p = 0.201$, the null hypothesis was not rejected, and there was no statistically significant evidence that the mean score on the moral index questions was different among the groups.

Table 1: Welch Test analysis of variance of the ninth-grade mean difference between the pre and post-test results of the social character index questions.

Source	DF Number	DF Den	F-Value	P-Value
9th Social Index All	2	56.635	0.220	0.807*

* Denotes no statistically significant difference at .05.

Table 5: Welch Test analysis of variance of the ninth-grade mean difference between the pre and post-test results of the ninth-grade moral character index questions.

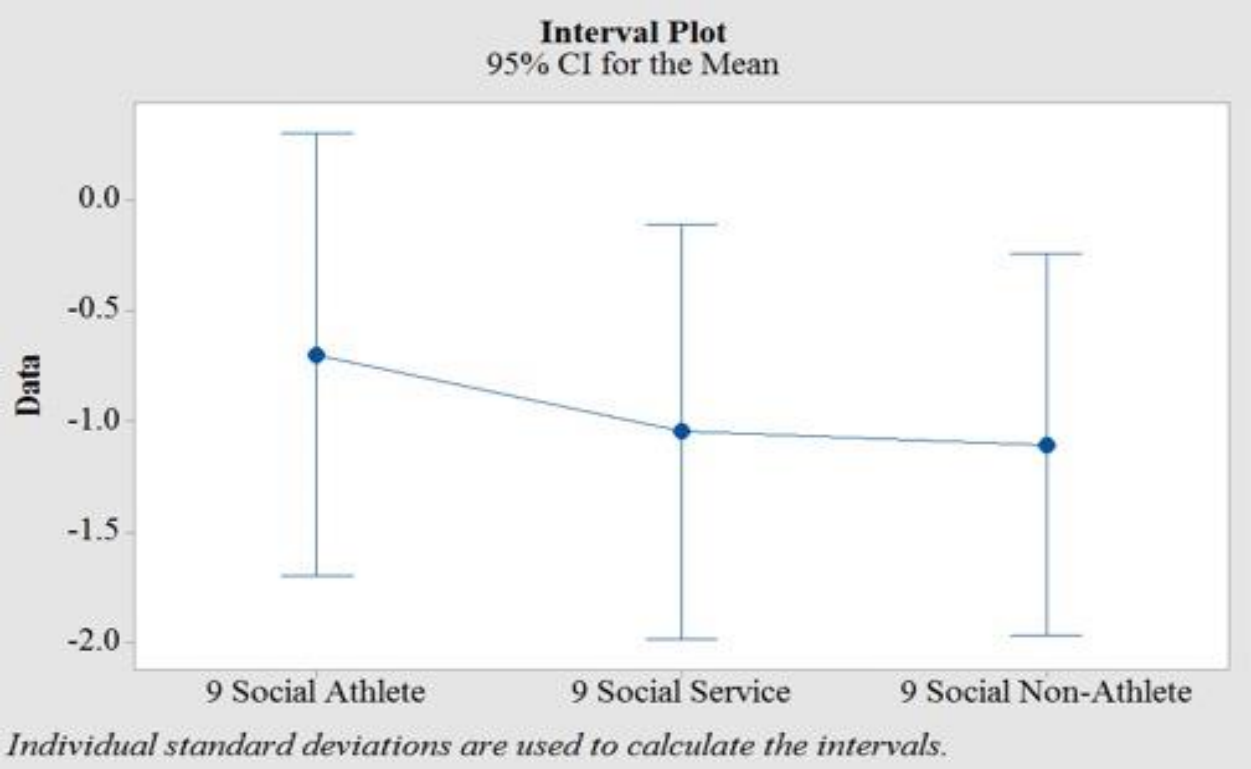
Source	DF Number	DF Den	F-Value	P-Value
9th Moral Index All	2	54.214	1.650	0.201*

* Denotes no statistically significant difference at 0.05.

Although there were no statistically significant changes as determined by the ANOVA run for this research question, a Games-Howell Pairwise Comparison analysis of variance of the ninth-grade mean difference between the pre- and post-test results of the social and moral character index questions took place as part of the pre-programmed procedures for the statistical software used for the research. Results of this post hoc procedure can be found in Table 6 and Graph 2 (Social Index Questions) and Table 7 and Graph 3 (Moral Index Questions). On the Social Index Questions, athletes ($n = 30$) had a mean score difference of ($M = -0.700$, $SD = 2.68$), service club members ($n = 21$) had a mean score difference of ($M = -1.048$, $SD = 2.061$) and non-athletes ($n = 47$) had a mean score difference of ($M = -1.106$, $SD = 2.928$). On the Moral Index Questions, athletes ($n = 30$) had a mean score difference of ($M = -1.567$, $SD = 4.584$), service club members ($n = 21$) had a mean score difference of ($M = -0.952$, $SD = 3.413$) and non-athletes ($n = 47$) had a mean score difference of ($M = 0.277$, $SD = 4.5$).

Table 6: Games-Howell Pairwise Comparison analysis of variance of the ninth-grade mean difference between the pre and post-test results of the social character index questions.

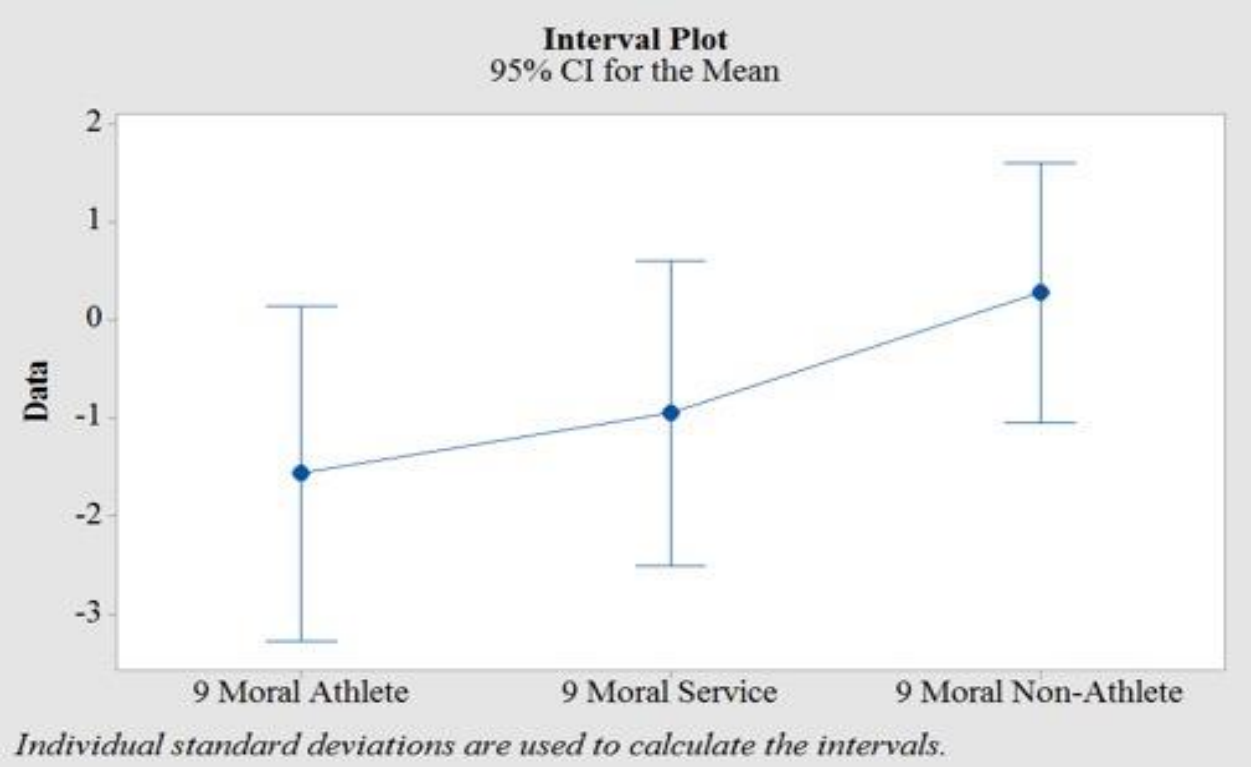
Factor	*n*	Mean	SD	Grouping
9th Social Index Athlete	30	-0.700	2.68	Attended workshop.
9th Social Index Service	21	-1.048	2.061	Did not attend workshop.
9th Social Index Non-Athlete	47	-1.106	2.928	Did not attend workshop.



Graph 2: Mean difference of all three ninth-grade groups' pre and post-test scores on the RSBH social index questions.

Table 2: Games-Howell Pairwise Comparison analysis of variance of the ninth-grade mean difference between the pre and post-test results of the moral character index questions.

Factor	*n*	Mean	SD	Grouping
9th Moral Index Athlete	30	-1.567	4.584	Attended workshop.
9th Moral Index Service	21	-0.952	3.413	Did not attend workshop.
9th Moral Index Non-Athlete	47	0.277	4.5	Did not attend workshop.



Graph 3: Mean difference of all ninth-grade groups' pre and post-test scores on the RSBH moral index questions.

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative study was to evaluate the effectiveness of workshops given to secondary athletes. This task was undertaken to determine to what degree, if any, such strategic intervention efforts are effective so that educators can better apply strategies that are effective. Results of this study indicated a statistically significant difference in ninth-graders' overall moral knowing as measured by the Rudd-Stoll-Beller-Hahm (RSBH) Value Judgment Inventory. Specifically, results show that a statistically significant change, $F(2, 56.543) = 5.340$ and $p = 0.007$, took place. The group that included athletes ($n = 30$) who attended had a positive difference in mean scores ($M = 1.933$, $SD = 4.425$) from pre-test to post-test, while the other two groups that did not attend workshops, service club members ($n = 21$, $M = -1.476$, $SD = 5.231$) and non-athletes ($n= 47$, $M = -0.979$, $SD = 3.487$) had lower scores on average. These findings support previous research that suggests that explicit instruction can facilitate positive developmental outcomes (Turnnidge, Cote, & Hancock, 2014).

It is likely that the reason for the workshop's positive effect on the moral knowing of the ninth-grade athletes was due to the workshop directly addressing the win-at-all-cost mentality so prevalent in athletics today (Ruud, 2005). This mentality suggests athletes should put aside their morality for the sake of winning. The RSBH tests the respondents' moral resolve when it comes to making moral decisions of this nature (Rudd, Stoll, Beller, & Hahm, 2009). The construction of the RSBH and its questions is such that it requires the respondent to choose whether winning or being moral is more important to them. Because the athletes in this study were taught how to navigate moral dilemmas at the workshop, it makes sense they would have a higher level of moral knowing, as suggested by Thompson (2014). Conversely, service club members and non-athletes did not receive the moral reinforcement that is present in the workshop, and their level of moral

knowing did not have a positive change.

While the athletes' mean scores in moral knowing increased after their attendance in the strategic intervention workshop, it is important for school leaders to continue with reinforcing key moral decision-making strategies since the decision-making process has three concepts that should be understood: moral knowing, moral valuing, and moral action (Likona, 1983). As Kohlberg (1969) and Rest (1979) noted, improved moral knowing is only an initial step in moral valuing and moral actions. If a significant long-lasting life skill transfer of this morality is to take place, coaches and those who are in direct contact with these athletes should utilize both implicit and explicit approaches as outlined by Turnnidge, Cote, and Hancock (2014).

The results of Research Question 2 suggest that attending a strategic intervention workshop focused on moral development had no statistical effect on a ninth-grader's moral knowing regarding the values evaluated by the social (loyalty, teamwork, and self-sacrifice) or moral (honesty, responsibility and justice) index questions. While not statistically significant, the results do suggest, however, that a ninth-grade athlete's moral knowing of the concepts of loyalty, teamwork, and self-sacrifice were higher than that of the other ninth-grade groups studied. The results also suggest that pressure of not failing their teammates and winning may affect a ninth-grade athlete's prioritizing of the concepts of honesty, responsibly, and justice.

A deeper dive into each series of questions revealed some interesting items which may provide clarity into these results. First, the ninth-grade athletes' scores on the social index questions were evaluated. The social index questions evaluated the level of moral knowing on the concepts of loyalty, teamwork, and self-sacrifice. While no statistically significant change occurred for this index of questions, the ninth-grade athletes (M = -0.700, SD = 2.68) scored the closest to a positive change out of all three groups (non-athletes M = -1.048, SD = 2.928, service club members M = -1.106, SD = 2.061). Athletes are coached, both implicitly and explicitly, as Turnnidge et al. (2014) suggest, daily on loyalty, teamwork, and self-sacrifice. Examples of how these values are taught can be found in pre-game speeches and mottos on team t-shirts. While a specific result of the findings cannot be statistically supported, the findings may demonstrate that these ninth-grade athletes have learned these values at a higher rate than their peers.

The results of the moral index questions (on the values of honesty, responsibility, and justice) unveiled a telling trend. The athletes' scores demonstrated the least moral knowing of these values (M = -1.567, SD = 4.584) of all three groups (non-athletes M = 0.277, SD = 4.5, service club members M = -0.952, SD = 3.413) on these questions. A deeper look at the construction of the questions in this index can provide some insight into why this may have occurred. The basic premise of these questions was this: answer one way, and you will be morally wrong, but your team will win; answer the other way, and you will be morally correct, but your team will lose. This is a unique moral dilemma to athletes and is aligned with the suggestion by Shields and Bredemeier (1995) and Eitzen (1988) that competition in sport may cause winning to supersede positive behaviors if coaches, parents, or athletes value winning above sportsmanship and fair play. It also supports the research by Nucci and Turiel (2009) which states that educators often underestimate the complexity of interactions between development in students' social and moral understandings and their applications in social contexts. While the other two peer groups may have been in similar moral dilemmas, this adds to the surrounding moral decision-making pressure that athletes face. Athletes scoring the lowest may also be attributed to them justifying their choices using Banduras' Eight Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement as suggested by Kavussanu (2007). Kavussanu (2007) stated that that the athletes may value winning and not disappointing their teammates, thereby creating a justification for selecting a morality.

Recommendations for Practice

While considering the results of this study, along with the body of research on moral development and the importance of leadership in developing school culture, the authors have three recommendations for practice. As school leaders make curricular decisions, it is essential that they be well-versed in the nuances of preparing students to make moral decisions. As such, the first recommendation is for school leaders to work collaboratively with teachers and athletic coaches to develop the explicit and hidden components of the curriculum to align with moral decision making. This can be achieved through an increased focus on professional learning for educators that emphasizes moral decision making and committing to developing a uniform expectation throughout the school. A second recommendation for practice is that a strategic, explicit, and ongoing efforts to develop moral knowing, specifically and as a corollary, moral decision making may be developed and implemented. This plan should include strategic intervention workshops and professional learning that highlights moral development as part of the formal curriculum for all ninth-grade students, including student-athletes. The third recommendation is for this plan to include hidden curricular approaches to ensure that the moral life skill transfer developed via the workshop is long-lasting. This should include schoolwide expectations for moral decisions and behaviors in the classroom and on sports fields that are modeled by the school's leadership. In addition to the recommendations for practice, the authors have recommendations for future researchers.

Recommendations for Further Study

While this study adds to the emerging body of research on the moral development of student-athletes, additional research in this area would be beneficial. As such, the researchers recommend four areas for future research. Two of the limitations of this study were the small sample size and not controlling for variables, which may have influenced moral knowing. Therefore, the first recommendation for future research is to conduct research with larger sample sizes utilizing the Rudd-Stoll-Beller-Hahm (RSBH) Value Judgment Inventory. This would add to the data set that has been collected utilizing this instrument and would provide further insight into how to best help students develop moral knowing. Second, further studies should be conducted to evaluate the efficacy of specific programs that target moral knowing while controlling for contextual variables. Context plays a large role in moral development and the decision-making process. Because this study was conducted in a private school with students from a relatively high socioeconomic status, additional research in other settings (charter schools, public schools) and with students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds would be beneficial. In addition to these recommendations related to the limitations of this study, it would be beneficial to conduct a longitudinal study for students that participated in a series of workshops to measure the impact over time. Also, the population should be expanded to include students from younger ages because, when students reach ninth grade, many factors may have already influenced their moral knowing. Therefore, additional research on the effectiveness of strategic intervention workshops that focus on moral development of younger students and student-athletes should be studied.

Conclusion

Moral decision-making is at the core of a stable and successful society. Often the development of moral decision making and the foundational components of those decisions are learned in schools and through participation in sports. In this study, we explored the impact explicit instruction

though intervention workshops had on the moral knowing, social character, and moral character of ninth-grade student-athletes. While the results of this study suggest that strategic intervention workshops had a statistically significant, positive impact on the moral knowing of the students who participated, there is much work that needs to be done. It is essential that educational leaders take a proactive and intentional approach to moral development.

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