

Male/Female Student Athletes' Moral Reasoning 1987-2004

Seventeen Year Study Results and Key Points

Cited in 100 scholarly presentations/research journals.

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- 72,000 individuals evaluated with the Hahm-Beller Values Choice Inventory (HBVCI): 15,000 females athletes in 45 studies. The HBVCI is a valid and reliable instrument to measure moral reasoning which is one component of moral character. The HBVCI is theoretically based on the belief that sport builds "MORAL" character. That is, it is believed that sport supports and builds the ideal premise of honesty, justice, and responsibility. We also know, as Thomas Lickona (See: Cortland State and Lickona's *Educating for Character*, Bantam Books, 1990) has stated that moral character is comprised of moral knowing, moral valuing, and moral behavior. For any consistent moral behavior to occur, there must be a moral knowing, "moral reasoning" component and ability. In our studies of over 72,000 individuals, the research is rather clear: the environment of athletics has not been supportive of teaching and modeling moral knowing, moral valuing, and moral action. Perhaps, because there are very limited consequences for immoral behaviors in the sport environment, but very large consequences in the real world.
- Most HBVCI studies have found male team sport athletes score significantly lower than individual sport athletes. Perhaps because competition is taught as, what David Shields (See: Notre Dame Mendelson Center for Character and Culture) has called, de-competition, whereby the opponent is not seen as an honorable opponent, but rather an obstacle, of little worth, to be overcome. This is important because reasoning is linked to moral behavior and conscience. It is also important in linking the problem of violence to conscience.
- Moral Reasoning scores of athlete populations can significantly improve with an exact, critical, scientific educational program in very short periods of time. Stoll & Beller have argued that this is because of moral masking. Athletes become morally calloused from their competitive environment (do whatever you gotta do to win), and morally justify their actions. (See R. Scott Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport*, 1994). This over time masks the normal moral development of contact, revenue producing athletes..

- Results on male athletes' moral reasoning have been fairly consistent -- the longer they participate in sport, the more morally calloused (R. Scott Kretchmar, 1994) they become -- the same appears to be happening with female athletes, especially team sport athletes. It appears that female athletes are being socialized into the current capitalistic, commodified model (See: John H. Gibson, *Performance Versus Results*, 1994) of moral callousness -- less of a concern for others and more of a concern for self. Typical scores for men range in the low 40s to 50s.
- Scores in the mid 50s and low 60s reflect reasoning perspectives that a typical junior high school student would reason from: What's in it for me; What it takes now to win; What someone tells me is right; little or no concern for others. Scores in the high 60s and above reflect reasoning that takes into account social order and principles.
- Most HBVCI studies have found that female team sport athletes score significantly lower than their non-competitive peers.
- Research by Rudd, 1999, suggests that sport may build and support a sort of "anti" character or social character, attributes such as hard work, dedication, loyalty and sacrifice. In Rudd's study of over 5,000 competitors it appears that these attributes are strong and cognitively supported. However, using 10 questions from the HBVCI, it is also clear that moral reasoning scores of the same population showed the same negative relation of all the earlier HBVCI studies. We must also understand that social character without moral character is dangerous...for one can be a highly dedicated, hard working rapist. Social character without the honorable traits of moral character is dishonorable behavior.
- Female team sport athletes are becoming more morally calloused: lack of respect, honor, and dignity toward fellow competitors, teammates, rules, and the spirit of the rules.
- A trend exists that female athletes' moral reasoning scores are lowering. Scores from 1987-1990 = high 60s; 1991-1993 = mid 60s; 1994-1997 = low 60s (on a scale of 21-105) (Hahm, 1989; Beller, 1990; Beller & Stoll, 1992; Beller & Stoll, 1995; Beller, Stoll, Burwell, & Cole, 1996; Stoll & Beller, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1997).
- Women have the equal right to participate in athletics and receive the benefits of that participation i.e. "Health, the self-respect to be gained by doing one's best, the cooperation to be learned from working with teammates and the incentive gained from having opponents, the 'character' of learning to be a good loser and a good winner, the chance to improve one's skill and learn to accept criticism -- and just plain fun". (English, 1978).
- Carol Gilligan, Chair of the Women's Studies Program at Harvard University, in "In a Different Voice" (1982) holds that there is a voice intrinsically related to other people, the ethic of care. While the ethic of care is not specific to one gender, she states that females have a supposed greater concern for personal relationships, care, and nurturing. Her model is based on an anthropological & sociological history of how women perceive themselves to be different than men and men perceive women to be different than men.
- Although Gilligan's care-giving, nurturing model was not formulated at the time, the DGWS, NAGWS, and the AIAW models were based on a care-giving

- nurturing approach to girls' and womens' participation in sport. In 1980, when women began participation in championships under the auspices of the NCAA guidance, the care-giving, nurturing model was replaced by one without a clear philosophic foundation, one that is more capitalistic commodified, than educative (Chu, 1989; Sage, 1986; Hoberman, 1984; Sperber, 1990; Gibson, 1993).
- It is not participation in the current implementation of Title IX that is of concern, but rather how the current competitive model is being managed and its concomitant effects on women and their care-giving and nurturing natures.
 - Title IX may not be the savior for women participating in sport, that so many believe it to be. The authors are not so naive as to believe that this movement will be abrogated by research. "The wagon is loaded, the horses are hitched, and WE are going to the promised land." We argue that the promised land does not appear to be "Beulah land" or "Nirvana"; it could well be "Hades".
 - In our zeal to be equal and our desire to have girls and women enjoy the same sport opportunities as men, quite possibly we have not adequately examined the entire picture of the current competitive model and suffer a blindness to the hard, real facts.
 - Kant states that things either have dignity or they have a price -- perhaps we have sold our dignity. Perhaps women have sold out the best part of themselves to the current competitive, male-dominated, capitalistic commodified sport arena. (See: Gibson, 1994). AS such we may be the lesser for it.
 - If we are at all concerned about the nature of women and their mental, physical, and social growth through sports, we as parents, coaches, teachers, professors, administrators, and media must challenge the status quo and DEMAND changes in governance and management of the current competitive model.
 - Administrators of any athletic program should be governed by the premise that rules, justice, and obligation should "...be a critical friend that does not get in the way of good judgment" (Peters, 1997). Empathy, respect, for others, and honor should be the foundation.

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