

Development of an Instrument to Measure Moral Judgments of Sport Managers

Andy Rudd, Florida State University

Session 7: Ethics Presentation (25-minute)

Thursday, May 31, 2007

1:30 PM - 1:55 PM

This presentation is designed to: 1) describe the development process of a quantitative instrument that purports to measure moral judgments of sport managers, and 2) share preliminary findings obtained from a pilot study (N=100 sport managers). Notably, the development of this instrument is an extension of a qualitative study from Rudd and Mondello (2006). Previously, they openly explored sport managers' encounters with ethical issues in their work setting as well as their ethical decision making. Since the 1970s, business scholars have been studying the ethical decision making of managers (Ford & Richardson, 1994). In fact, more recently, O'Fallon & Butterfield (2005) reviewed 174 business ethics related studies from 1996-2003 demonstrating the continued interest in the study of ethical decision making. This wealth of research has undoubtedly been stimulated by a long line of corporate scandals involving managers (Sims, 1994; Sims & Felton, 2006).

Hums, Barr, and Gullion (1999) proposed managers in the "business of sport" or sport management are also faced with a variety of ethical dilemmas related to professionalism, equity, legal management, personnel issues, team ownership, responsibilities of professional team franchises, and social justice. They identified these ethical areas as being embedded in five major segments of the sport industry: professional sport, intercollegiate athletics, recreational sport, health and fitness club management, and facility management. Also, Malloy and Zakus (1995) suggested sport managers/sport administrators of major sports organizations are under severe corporate and public pressures to win and financially profit which in turn, cause many managers to maintain a "win at all cost" philosophy (see also, Kjeldsen, 1992).

Despite the ethical concerns raised by some sport management scholars, the field of sport management has seen little empirical research on ethical decision making. Rudd and Mondello (2006) may be the only ones who have attempted to empirically investigate the ethical decision making of sport managers. They sought to determine if empirical data from interviews with sport managers would be consistent with Hums et al.'s perceptions of ethical issues occurring in various sport management settings. Within the interviews they also explored how sport managers go about resolving or reasoning through ethical dilemmas. Results from Rudd and Mondello's study showed sport managers struggled to provide examples of ethical issues occurring in their work setting. Out of the 12 managers interviewed, 10 provided 0 to 3 examples, 8 of which gave only 0 to 2 examples. Furthermore, of the examples provided, few were consistent with the types of ethical issues identified by Hums et al. Rudd and Mondello provided a number of reasons why sport managers failed to identify ethical issues experienced in their work settings. They also attempted to explain why sport managers identified ethical issues different from those suggested by Hums et al. Page limitations do not allow for a complete recap of the different reasons given. However, a few reasons are highlighted here. First, they argued sport managers may fail to recognize ethical issues as a result of deficient critical thinking and moral reasoning skills (Stoll & Beller, 2006). Second, there may be variability in how people interpret ethical problems (Jones, 1991; Rest, 1986; Waters, Bird, & Chant, 1986). Some may view a particular issue as being an ethical one, while others may not. Third, the pursuit of nonmoral values in the form of financial profits, championships, and higher ranking positions may cloud sport managers' moral judgments.

Rudd and Mondello ultimately recommended additional studies are needed given they were the first to investigate sport managers' encounters with ethical issues and their ethical decision making. In particular, because their study was qualitative and used a small sample size, they suggested quantitative studies be conducted to attain a broader understanding of sport managers' ethical decision making. Do sport managers have poor ethical decision making skills? A single, qualitative study cannot answer such a question. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to develop a quantitative instrument that allows for a broader assessment of sport managers' ethical decision making. Learning more about sport managers' ethical decision making abilities or lack thereof could play an important role in the future shaping of sport management curriculums, i.e., the addition of more ethics courses and training.

To clarify, although there are other existing instruments that purportedly measure some form of ethical decision making, these existing instruments are not in the sport management context. Research suggests the context of an ethical issue can affect one's ethical decision making/moral reasoning. Weber (1990) for example, found managers morally reasoned at a lower level over ethical dilemmas in a business context compared to ethical dilemmas outside the corporate environment. Similarly, Bredemeier and Shields (1984) found college and high school athletes and non athletes demonstrated a lower level of moral reasoning when evaluating sport related ethical dilemmas compared to general life dilemmas. In order to maximize the accuracy of assessing the ethical decision making of sport managers, an instrument is needed specifically in the context of sport management.

2007 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2007)

Originally, it was hoped interviews conducted with sport managers would help generate items for the new ethical decision making instrument. However, as mentioned, few examples of ethical issues were given (although some examples provided may be useful). As an alternative, items for the new instrument are currently being developed based on other existing ethical/moral judgment instruments. Examples of such instruments include Kohlberg's Standard-Issue Scoring Moral Judgment Inventory (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987), the Defining Issues Test (Rest, 1977), and the Hahm-Beller Values Choice Inventory (Hahm, Beller, & Stoll, 1989). Items will also be formed from the conceptual and philosophical work of those such as Hums et al and Malloy and Zakus (1995) as well as qualitative work by Derry (1989) and Waters et al.

Theoretically, the instrument will be supported by a combination of moral philosophy and moral psychology. Specifically, the instrument will be based on the second component of Rest's (1986) four-component moral decision making model. The second component of Rest's model is concerned with people's ability to make a moral judgment about what is right and wrong. The instrument will also be based on deontological ethics, which holds that right versus wrong is determined by strict adherence to moral principles regardless of the consequences (Frankena, 1973).

From the pilot data, detailed evidence of the instrument's reliability and validity will be provided as well as statistical results describing how sport managers scored on the instrument.