Over the last 25 years, much literature has been written regarding the relationship of participation in sports, competition, and moral development (Bailey, Reall, & Stoll 1998; Beach, 1999; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986, 1990; Ebbeck, Gibbons, & Weiss, 1995; Gibbs, 2003; Kohn, 1992; Shields & Bredemeier, 2005; Stoll & Beller, 1998; Walker, 2002). In general, much of the research conducted has been on young adults and people involved with collegiate athletics (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986, 1994; Reall, Bailey, & Stoll 1998; Stoll, & Beller, 1998). A number of studies have examined moral development and sportsmanship, but there has been little exploration of what is the best method of moral education to foster moral development growth in sport management students. Nonetheless, one needs to understand moral development and its theories before one can implement the proper instruction method for a moral education agenda in sport management programs.

According to Gill (1993), certain instruction methodologies like a Maieutic Socratic methodology that emphasize prime moral values as underlying themes to class activity, are the best pedagogical methods for moral education. Perhaps, one could suggest that non Maieutic Socratic teaching methodologies, which pertain to the notion that students will discover moral values through lectures and class experience are less capable of accomplishing moral development in sport management programs. Gill (1993) claims that most non Maieutic teaching methodologies are instructor centered instead of student centered like the Maieutic Socratic methodology. In essence, moral values are often never openly discussed or highlighted with the teacher centered approaches; rather, the moral values are usually embedded in the general philosophies and framework of classes in the sport management curriculum.

If this is the case, one could argue that moral education appears to be more discrete in non Maieutic Socratic styles of instruction. For sport management to aid the moral development of students, perhaps a better approach to moral education exists where moral values are explicitly discussed in relation to some of the class content. Stoll (2008) suggests that a Maieutic Socratic teaching method is one such approach that explicitly addresses the moral values before the issues. In addition, this student centered approach may be superior in developing moral reasoning within sport management students than non Maieutic Socratic methods.

According to Gazzaniga’s (2005) account, the ethical brain’s greatest moral growth occurs between the ages of 16-22. In addition, he claims that this is the phase when moral education also has its greatest impact. If Gazzaniga is correct, which he may be considering the work of Tancredi (2005), Pfaff (2007), and others; traditional sport management students (ages 18-23) would therefore be best served through a classroom environment and curriculum that engages in a reflective and challenging moral discussion. Moreover, William D. Casebeer, a philosopher at USAFA stated, “We are social creatures and if we are to flourish in our social environments, we must learn how to reason well about what we should do”. Also, according to several writers and researchers (D’Aquili & Newberg, 1999; Eccles, & Gootman, 2002; Gazzaniga, 2005; Pfaff, 2007; Resnick, 2002; Stoll, 2008; Tancredi, 2005), moral reasoning is strongly desired amongst younger populations that fall in the age range of the majority of traditional students enrolled in sport management programs.

Throughout the last 50 years, researchers such as Piaget (1932), Kohlberg (1969), Rest (1973), Gilligan (1982), Bredemeier and Shields (1986), Stoll and Beller (1987), Ebbeck, Gibbons, and Weiss (1995), and Gibbs (2003) have all discovered through empirical research that moral reasoning is a continual process that is consistently developing throughout one’s lifetime. However, what has not received as much attention is the best pedagogical method to enhance moral development within young populations, particularly in sport management classrooms.

This presentation will concern: (a) improved moral educational tools that may help sport management students and instructors learn the importance of its effects throughout life, (b) emphasize the magnitude of a conceptual ethics’ education, (c) and offer suggestions for improving the current ethics education philosophy in sport management programs.