

Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct in Sport Management

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Chapter 1

Introduction

What Is the Difference Between a Code of Ethics and a Code of Conduct?

A code of ethics is an aspirational document, designed to guide ethical decision-making, and a code of conduct is a directional document, designed to govern specific actions. A code of ethics provides a set of moral standards, ideals, principles, and values to influence ethical judgments; a code of conduct provides a clear set of expectations about which behaviors are required, acceptable, or prohibited, requiring little judgment. While a code of ethics is typically wide in scope and general in nature, a code of conduct is typically narrow in scope and very specific in nature. A code of ethics, therefore, is a set of principles to guide decision-making regarding questions of right and wrong, good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable behavior, ethical and unethical behavior. A code of conduct is the practical application of a code of ethics, a set of rules and regulations that address required behavior in specific, relevant situations, dictating how professionals should act (Surbhi, 2017).

Ethics Defined

Ethics has been the subject of inquiry for centuries. The term “ethics” is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning character, and from the Latin word *mores*, meaning customs. Taken together, the two words combine to define how individuals choose to interact with one another (Cornell Law Scholl, n.d.).

Simply stated, ethics may be thought of as a branch of philosophy dealing with questions of right and wrong, good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable behavior, moral obligation and responsibility. Ethics is a system or set of moral standards, ideals, principles, or values, a system or a set of accepted beliefs designed to guide ethical behavior.

Moral Standards

Since morality may be viewed as being in accord with standards of right and good, then moral standards are those behaviors that make the distinction between right and wrong, good and bad.

Ethical Behavior Defined

Ethical behavior may be viewed simply as the application of moral standards, ideals, principles, and values, or the application of accepted beliefs in a given situation. Therefore, ethical behavior means acting in accordance with moral standards and engaging in proper conduct. In the workplace, or within active participation in professional organizations, ethical behavior is “doing the right thing” by adhering to the code of ethics adopted by a company or the members of a professional organization.

Honesty and Integrity

Two of the common threads woven into every code of ethics are honesty and integrity: two virtues, which make up the foundation for ethical behavior. Simply stated, honesty deals with words; integrity deals with actions. Honest people tell the truth; people with integrity do the right thing, even when no one is watching (DifferenceBetween.com, 2015).

Honesty

We have all heard the words: honesty is the best policy. As stated, honesty means telling the truth at all times. Honest people don't lie. Honesty is a facet of moral character that connotes positive and virtuous attributes such as truthfulness and straightforwardness, as well as the absence of lying, cheating, and theft (Wikipedia, 2023). When people learn to be honest at all times, it actually makes life easier for them. Remember this: you never have to apologize for telling the truth!

Integrity

The word integrity comes from Latin word *enteros*, which was derived from *integer*, the Latin word for entire, which means whole. Therefore, integrity could be viewed as what makes a person whole, what makes a person a full person, someone who can act with honesty, who can see the difference in between right and wrong, who has the courage to do the right thing. (Ibrahim, 2016). Simply stated, integrity means doing the right thing at all times (Random Acts of Kindness.org, n.d.).

Integrity has a much broader meaning than honesty. Although people with integrity may always be honest, not all honest people may always have integrity. A simple example could be that while you were working alone in your office late one night, you inadvertently threw away a file in the sports information department that should have been saved. If you never said anything, and if no one ever asked you about it, you could console yourself by saying, “I'm still an honest person because I never told a lie.” However, a person with integrity would admit the mistake. Therefore, integrity

is adhering to an ethical code. People with integrity follow a code of ethics even when it is difficult to do so (HASA, 2016).

Ethical Dilemma

An ethical dilemma, or a moral dilemma, is a situation in which two moral principles appear to conflict or to compete with one another. An ethical dilemma serves to challenge the moral beliefs or moral reasoning skills of professionals when they are confronted with a debatable situation. When confronted with a difficult issue, professionals use a code of ethics to guide their decision-making.

Code of Ethics

A code of ethics or an ethical code refers to a formal, written set of guidelines to address the moral standards, ideals, principles, and values that members of a profession adopt to reflect the highest standards of ethical behavior. A code of ethics outlines the core values and the proper conduct that professionals must live by in carrying out their professional responsibilities. Members of a profession make their code of ethics a matter of public record to demonstrate to society at large, as well as to each other, the proper conduct that can be expected of the members of a profession. A code of ethics is one of the major characteristics that distinguish a profession from other fields of work. A code of ethics says to society at large these are the principles that represent the highest standards of professional behavior, principles, which enhance the credibility of the profession and serve to promote trust on the part of the general public.

A code of ethics addresses what is considered ethical behavior for the profession and, in doing so, demonstrates what would be considered unethical behavior for the profession. It guides what professionals should consider when faced with certain ethical problems. As noted, a code of ethics serves as a guide for the profession in general, as well as a guide for the individual members of a profession. In addition, a code of ethics provides an important avenue for members of a profession to articulate their core values, such as honesty and integrity, values that all members of the profession should embrace (Gordon, 2022).

As also noted, a code of ethics is a guide of principles designed to help professionals conduct their activities with honesty and with integrity. A code of ethics written document may outline the vision and mission as well as the values of a profession, how professionals are supposed to approach ethical problems, the ethical principles to be considered based on core values of a profession, and the standards to which all professionals are held. A code of ethics spells out, not only an organization's ethical guidelines, but also the best practices to follow to promote honesty, integrity, and professionalism (Hayes, 2022).

Purposes of a Code of Ethics

Professional ethics should be at the core of any profession. Since there is a common concern for collective self-discipline in every profession, then every profession has an obligation to articulate its moral standards, ideals, principles, and values. A

code of ethics sets forth those standards, ideals, principles, and values to guide ethical conduct. A code of ethics is relevant to all professionals, regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve.

A code of ethics serves six purposes:

1. It identifies core values on which a profession's vision and mission is based
2. It summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession's core values and establishes a set of specific ethical standards that should be used to guide social professional practice
3. It is designed to help professionals identify relevant considerations when faced with ethical dilemmas, when professional obligations appear to conflict or ethical uncertainties arise
4. It makes a matter of public record the ethical standards to which the general public can hold professionals accountable
5. It contributes to the development of a professional culture by socializing students and practitioners new to the profession of the vision, mission, ethical standards, ideals, principles, and values of a profession, and encourages everyone in the profession to engage in self-care, ongoing education, and other activities to ensure their commitment to those common-core features of the profession
6. Since a profession is called upon to regulate its own activities, a code of ethics articulates the standards the profession itself can use to assess whether one of its members has engaged in unethical conduct (National Association of Social Workers, n.d.)

What a Code of Ethics Does Not Do

1. It does not provide a set of rules that prescribe specifically how professionals should act in all situations.
2. It does not always specify which values, principles, and standards are most important and ought to outweigh others in all instances when they appear to conflict.
3. It does not resolve all ethical issues.
4. It does not guarantee ethical behavior!

Ethical decision-making is a process. In situations when conflicting obligations arise, members of a profession may be faced with complex ethical dilemmas that have no simple answers. Therefore, members of a profession should take into consideration all of the moral standards, ideals, principles, and values contained in the code that appear to be relevant to any situation in which ethical judgment is warranted. The challenge for professionals is to strive to be consistent with the "spirit" of the code as well as the letter of the code. (When a reasonable resolution of a conflict does not appear possible, it is not a sign of weakness for professionals to seek proper consultation before making a decision.)

Components of Codes of Ethics

Typically, ethical codes have several sections: an introduction, preamble, principles, and standards. The purpose of an introduction is to identify issues such as the intent of the code of ethics, as well as to provide procedural and organizational clarity about the codes and how the codes are to be used. The purpose of a preamble is to outline the values of the organization and to encourage members to meet the highest possible ideals set by the organization and outlined within the code. Principles are usually viewed as general statements about the codes of ethics that provide a background into the rationale for the development of the specific standards and guide practitioners toward the highest ideals for practice. That is to say, the principles represent the aspirations of the organization, statements designed to provide guidance to individuals, who are faced with ethical decisions. An example of a principle would be maintaining integrity. Standards are the more specific portion of the codes designed to direct ethical behavior. Standards are often written somewhat broadly to assist members in making ethical decisions across a range of situations. An example of a standard would be maintaining confidentiality (researchnet.com, 2023).

Code of Conduct

Unlike a code of ethics, a code of conduct outlines specific practices or behaviors that are required or prohibited as a condition of ongoing employment, or as a condition for continued membership in an organization. For example, it might forbid sexual harassment, racial intimidation, or viewing inappropriate or unauthorized content on company computers (Nieweler 2014).

A code of conduct sets out the actual rules, so it lays down the “dos” and “don’ts” for employees or members of an organization. The members are responsible for its adherence and held accountable for any violations. A code of conduct spells out specific regulations and responsibilities for employees or members of an organization. A code of conduct is a written statement that contains the rules of behavior that must be followed by employees or members of an organization. The document directs the employees or members of an organization in various matters.

A code of conduct is a body of rules and regulations that explain what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior in specific situations. Most businesses and organizations have a code of conduct. A code of conduct serves to explain specifically how professionals must act within a company or organization. It lays out, in specific terms, what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior in a given company or organization. Moreover, it typically covers major legal, and compliance risk areas in a business. Besides some of the general areas, a code of conduct can also cover specific behavior involving the work environment such as equal opportunities or policies regarding harassment, substance abuse, violence, and safety measures. It can also include such considerations as protecting intellectual property, security information, corruption, and conflicts of interest. Furthermore, the code of conduct explains what employees must do to implement the code of ethics of a company or an organization. In other words, as noted earlier, the code of conduct may be thought of as the practical appli-

cation of the code of ethics. For companies or organizations, which have both a code of ethics and a code of conduct, the code of conduct is typically formed directly from the code of ethics, and represents the implementation or the practical application of the code of ethics.

Keep in mind that a code of ethics and a code of conduct are two different written documents, although some people assume them to be the same or use the two terms interchangeably. The main difference between a code of ethics and a code of conduct is that code of ethics is a guide to ethical decision-making, and a code of conduct is a set of rules and regulations that explain appropriate behavior required in specific situations (Hasa, 2020).

Key Differences Between Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct

The major differences between code of ethics and code of conduct are the following:

1. A code of ethics is an aspirational document to guide decision-making, containing core moral standards, ideals, principles, and ethical values of a company or an organization; a code of conduct is a directional document containing specific behaviors and practices that must be followed or restricted in a company or organization.
2. A code of ethics is general in nature, whereas a code of conduct is specific.
3. A code of ethics is wide in scope; a code of conduct is narrow in scope.
4. Whereas a code of ethics guides ethical judgments and ethical decision-making, a code of conduct regulates actions and specific behaviors.
5. A code of ethics is a shorter document than a code of conduct.
6. A code of ethics is made available to the general public; a code of conduct is typically available only to employees or members of an organization, but it can also be accessible to others.
7. A code of ethics focuses on moral standards, ideals, principles, and values; a code of conduct focuses on rules, regulations, and compliance (Surbhi, 2017).

Table 1
Comparison Chart

Basis for Comparison	Code of Ethics	Code of Conduct
Type of Document	An Aspirational Document to Guide Ethical Decision-Making	A Directional Document Containing Specific Required Behaviors
Nature of the Document	General	Specific
Scope of the Document	Wide	Narrow
Activity Governed	Decision-Making	Actions and Specific Behaviors
Length of the Document	Typically Short	Typically Long
Disclosure of the Document	A Matter of Public Record	A Matter for Employees or Members of an Organization
Focus	Moral Standards, Ideals, Principles, and Values	Rules, Regulations, and Compliance

Chapter 2

Why Should Sport Management Students Study Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct?

Ethical behavior is necessary if the emerging profession of sport management is to increase its credibility. Students need to understand what it means to function within a profession. Members of a profession strive not only to fulfill their assigned job duties and responsibilities to the best of their abilities within their organization, but also to fulfill their duties and responsibilities to advance their profession. Professionals become active members in professional associations, volunteer for leadership roles, engage in continuing education, conduct or support research, and pledge to abide by the codes of ethics adopted by the members of the professional associations. They also pledge to abide by the codes of conduct adopted by the members of professional associations and organizations. Therefore, sport management students need to learn about the set of common standards and rules associated with sport management, and they need to know what is considered to be the best practices associated with sport management. They need to understand that those who receive the services of sport managers want to be assured they are receiving the best practices and services available and that sport managers govern themselves to provide the highest standards possible of ethical conduct.

Students need to know and be willing to embrace the moral standards, ideals, principles, and values that bring sport managers together, and they need to know the shared expectations professionals hold for each other. Students should be proud to belong to an emerging profession, which provides a framework and high standards for their industry. They should know where to find the codes of ethics on the websites of professional associations or organizations. (It's not unusual for professionals to frame their code of ethics and to hang it in their office to serve as a constant reminder of the importance of ethical behavior.) (Switzer, 2020).

Codes of ethics and codes of conduct are a part of a professional culture. Students need to understand that when everyone clearly knows the ethical standards and appropriate behaviors of an organization, they are more likely to recognize wrongdoing and to do something about it. Members of a profession are hesitant to commit an unethical act if they believe that everyone else around them knows the behavior is wrong, and those tempted to engage in unethical behavior know they are more likely to get caught in professional environments that emphasize ethical behavior.

Students need to know that unethical behavior can be very damaging to themselves and their emerging profession of sport management. Breaking a code of ethics or a code of conduct can result in termination or dismissal from an organization. Unethical behavior can have serious consequences. Students need to know what it means to operate with integrity, competence, diligence, respect, and in an ethical manner, and to know how unethical behavior can affect all of the stakeholders in sport management: athletes, participants in sports programs, colleagues, employers, members of society at large, and themselves. Students need to understand that ethical behavior means placing the interests of those they serve above their own personal interests. Students need to know how important it is, not only to practice ethical behavior as individuals, but also to encourage colleagues to practice ethical behavior that will reflect credit on their emerging profession of sport management (Hayes, 2022).

Students need to know that ethical decision-making is a process, and there are not always simple answers to complex ethical dilemmas. Students need to know to take into consideration all of the moral standards, ideals, principles, and values in a code of ethics that are relevant to a given situation in which ethical judgment is warranted, and students need to know that their decisions and actions should be consistent with the "spirit" of the code of ethics, as well as the letter of the code.

With the rapid growth and the expanded use of social media in various aspects of sport management, students need to be aware of the unique challenges that may arise in relation to the maintenance of confidentiality, informed consent, professional boundaries, professional competence, record keeping, and other ethical considerations. Students need to understand that all ethical standards in a code of ethics and all rules and regulations in a code of conduct are applicable to interactions, relationships, and communications, whether they occur in person or with the use of social media.

Students must also understand that a code of ethics cannot guarantee ethical behavior, and a code of ethics cannot resolve all ethical issues. While a code of ethics reflects the commitment of all professionals to uphold the profession's moral stan-

dards, ideals, principles, and values, students need to understand that ethical behavior requires their personal commitment to engage in ethical practice. (Upholding moral standards requires individuals of good character who, in good faith, seek to make ethical judgments to reflect the highest moral standards possible.) (National Association of Social Workers, n.d.).

While students and young professionals generally understand the usefulness of codes of ethics, that is not always sufficient to keep individuals behaving ethically. To behave in an ethical manner on a consistent basis requires students to study ethical codes carefully in order to develop the skills needed for ethical decision-making. By studying ethical codes carefully, students will be able to recognize when challenging ethical situations arise. They will gain a different perspective of their need to use maturity, judgment, discretion, and wisdom in the decision-making process; to understand the competing influences affecting their judgment; to systematically consider the consequences of their actions; and to gain a clear understanding of the principles behind the codes (Researchnet.com, 2023).

Students also need to study codes of ethics to understand the difference between what is illegal and what is unethical. Simply stated, if something is illegal, it is against the law; if something is unethical, it is morally wrong. That's why it is so important for students to understand that the law is not the ceiling, but the floor. Too often, there are those who would say, "If it's not illegal, I'm free to do anything I want to do." Those see the law as the ceiling, and anything under it is OK. What students need to embrace is the view that the law is the floor, and there are some ethical considerations to be made, which go above the law. That is to say, an act may not be illegal, but it would still be unethical. (For example, if students in sport management were to indicate on their resumes that they already held the bachelor of science degree when applying for a job, but they were actually still working on their final course requirements for the degree, the act would not be illegal, but it would be unethical to provide misleading or false information regarding their qualifications. (The ethical act would be to indicate the anticipated date of graduation of their resumes.)

In addition, students need to know that it is not easy to remain ethical in some areas of sport management; it can be hard. Take a specific example from college athletics. With the enormous pressure to attract the best basketball players, some staff members in an athletic department may feel tempted to violate NCAA recruitment rules, knowingly and willingly. After all, think how often you hear, "Well, everyone else is violating the rules," or "There is little chance of being caught," or "The penalties are not that great, even if caught." Those are the comments of people who want to justify their actions on the basis of "situational ethics." The great challenge, of course, for students who wish to make a career in sport management and to advance their profession is to operate with integrity in all cases; that is to say, to operate without deception in all situations requiring ethical judgments.

Students must also understand the difference between gamesmanship and sportsmanship. In sport management, gamesmanship is an ethical concern; sportsmanship is a unique, ethical obligation. The difference between gamesmanship and sportsmanship was best described in 2012 by Hanson and Savage in their essay on the role ethics

plays in sports. (Kirk O. Hanson was the executive director of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University, and Matt Savage was a Hackworth Fellow at the Center. Their materials were prepared for the Institute for Sports Law and Ethics, of which the Markkula Center is a partner organization.) According to Hanson and Savage, gamesmanship is based on the principle that winning is everything, and athletes and coaches are encouraged to bend the rules wherever possible in order to gain a competitive advantage over an opponent (Hanson & Savage, 2012).

Some of the key tenets of gamesmanship are winning is everything, and it's only cheating if you get caught; and some of the examples would be faking a foul or injury, tampering with equipment, taunting or intimidating opponents, and using performance-enhancing drugs. A more ethical approach to athletic competition would be sportsmanship. Under a sportsmanship model, ethical competition is seen as a means of cultivating personal honor, virtue, and character. The goal in sportsmanship would not be simply winning, but pursuing victory with honor by giving one's best effort. Therefore, ethical behavior in sport would require four key virtues: fairness, integrity, responsibility, and respect. The sportsmanship model is based on the idea that sport both demonstrates and encourages character development, which then would influence the moral character of the broader community.

Those who would support the concept of gamesmanship would argue for a “bracketed morality” within athletic competition and sport management. This approach holds that sport and athletic competition are set apart from real life, and occupy a realm where ethical behavior and moral codes do not apply. Instead, they would argue, sports serves as an outlet for primal aggression and a selfish need for recognition and respect gained through the conquering of an opponent. In this view, aggression and victory would serve as the only virtues. For example, football players could be described as mean and nasty on the field, but kind and gentle in everyday life. Their violent dispositions on the field would not be wrong because when they are playing the game, they are part of an amoral reality that is dictated only by the principle of winning. Students need to understand that those who embrace the ethical approach to sport and sport management would strongly reject the concept of a bracketed morality! (Hanson & Savage, 2012).

Finally, students need to know that it is never too early to start thinking about what it means to embrace ethical behavior. It takes a special, personal commitment to study codes of ethics and codes of conduct seriously, to be willing to take the high road throughout one's professional career, to do the right thing when challenged, to operate with honesty and integrity in fulfilling all professional duties and responsibilities. In addition, if students are to serve in administrative and supervisory roles during their careers, they must be familiar with the ethical codes of various associations and governing bodies in sport management. (That is why this text covers a wide range of organizations in sport management.)

As an informal way for students to begin orienting themselves to ethical thinking, even before being presented with the formal, written codes of ethics and codes of conduct that exist in sport management, students should think about the “Golden

Rule”: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. In other words, treat people the same way you would want to be treated. A second informal consideration is what some call the “Professional Ethic.” That is, what would your colleagues think about your behavior in a given situation? Would they agree that the action you took was the right thing to do? And a third informal consideration is what some call the “TV Test.” Would you feel comfortable defending your action in front of a national television audience?

Then, there are also some more formal considerations students could make. The first would be the Test of Consequences. What was the result of your action? Did it result in the greatest good, or did it result in heartache and misery? (This approach has been termed *teleology* and includes the utilitarian theory, a perspective, which promotes “the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people,” based on the work of the 19th-century British philosopher John Stewart Mill. Simply stated, this approach would say the end always justifies the means.

The second would be the Test of Consistency. Would you want your action to be the action taken by all people, in all places, at all times? (This approach has been termed *deontology* and includes the categorical imperative, a rule of conduct, which is unconditional or absolute, regardless of intent or consequences. This approach is based on the work of the 18th-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Simply stated, this approach would say the end does not justify the means.)

And the third would be the Test of Intentions. What did you intend to occur by your action? Was your action honorable, or did you intend for something else to occur as a result of your action. (This approach is based on the works of the Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. Simply stated, an ethical person wants to do the right thing, intends to do the right thing.) (A well-known example from sport management is a head coach hiring a top recruit’s father as an assistant coach. Did the coach intend to hire the best assistant coach available or did the head coach intend to attract the top recruit by a devious hiring of the father? Coaches refer to this practice as “package deals.” Needless to say, there are very strong opinions on both sides of this ethical issue.)

Did you think this would be easy?

Welcome to the world of codes of ethics and codes of conduct!