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Character Education in High School Athletics: Activities Director's Role

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Character Education in High School Athletics:
Activities Director's Role

A Capstone Project

By

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Character education enriches students' ability to understand and make the right choices based on their core beliefs (U.S Department of Education, 2008). The number of compromising acts showing a lack of character by society's high school age youth is on the rise (Scifres, 2009). The increase in harmful behavior added to a decrease of moral intuition demonstrated by today's youth is creating a gap between the potential and the reality of the success of members of society (Sojourner, 2012). Furthermore, the number of young people who believe comprising acts can be carried out without consequences continues to grow (Scifres, 2009). Youth today are vulnerable to freely available forms of dangerous and harmful influences through media and technology that was not available in the past (Pala, 2011). The increase in negative behaviors, especially in schools, is a result of society lacking shared values (Britzman, 2005).

Although knowledge on the effects on society caused by declining character is evident; having good character cannot be assumed and needs to be purposefully developed through an intentional process (Pala, 2011). To counter the rising incidences of poor character behaviors, students need development in the areas of character and social competence (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005). Character education has become more important for today's youth in America who are faced more questions and problems than older generations had to encounter on a daily basis (Pala, 2011).

Reports show the increasing instances of negative displays of character by today's athletes directly affect the actions presented by high school student-athletes both on and off the field (Dada 2016). Society views evidence of professional athletes showing character unfit of being an example for young people on a daily basis (Doty & Lumpkin, 2010). A survey by the Kaiser

Family Foundation shows 74% of youth surveyed report standard practice for a professional athlete to yell at an official (Ireland, 2011). These displays of negative character need to be balanced out by positive character influences on society's children.

Character education is a part of school programming dealing with high schoolers. School-based character education programs provide alternative results than home-based programs due to different groupings of students working together with various school officials (Cheung, 2010). Professionals in the field of education have documented students' character affecting their academic success just as much as the students' knowledge, if not more (Pappano, 2013). A 2003 study showed students in schools who had implemented more character education programs tested higher on academic assessments (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2003). Another study by Park and Peterson (2006) reported results of up to a 16% gain in achievement after implementing character education into programs within the school. Hayes, Lewis, and Robinson (2011) emphasize the importance of schools implementing an effective character education curriculum that encompasses all programs associated with the school, sports included.

The relationship between character and sport participation is a topic that has received much attention throughout the world (Dodge & Robertson, 2004). According to research by the Josephine Institute Center of Sport Ethics (2006), high school students involved in sports and other extracurricular activities miss less school, have higher graduation rates, participate in less illegal substance use, and have less behavior related issues in school than students who are not. Children who participate in sports gain both psychological and social health benefits (Charity, Eime, Harvey, Payne, and Young, 2013). Specifically, increases in positive character traits are a result of participation in the high school sport when character education is in place (Parker and Stiehl, 2004). Perseverance is an example of a positive character trait that when fostered through athletics

and combined with other positive values can lead to the development of a highly successful person and citizen (Chansem, Geok, Latif, Nazarudin, Omar-Fauzee, Sputra, Sutresna, & Taweasuk, 2012).

High schoolers who enroll in sports are entitled to a program designed to intentionally build positive character attributes (Doty & Lumpkin, 2010). High school administrators are responsible for being proactive in initiating character development within the sports programming in secondary education institutions while promoting development and reducing incidents caused by lack of character (Camire & Trudel, 2008). Although high school sports can build character it does not happen automatically, rather needs to be done purposefully (Austin, 2010). Sports can help to develop life skills in youth, along with character traits including discipline, sportsmanship, teamwork, and time management (Lumpkin & Stokowski, 2011). To gain these desired benefits, coaches and administrators must develop environments that foster the student-athletes' growth in the areas of ethics and moral reasoning (Stoner, 2004).

The need for character education in sports is partly due to the slow decline of sportsmanship caused by influences emphasizing the importance on the outcome of competitions (Chansem, Geok, Latif, Nazarudin, Omar-Fauzee, Sputra, Sutresna, & Taweasuk, 2012). Student-athletes often have a feeling of pressure from society placed on them to win (Omar-Fauzee, et al. 2012). Optimal results of building character in young athletes through sports do not occur when winning is the importance of participation (Barez, 2008). The importance placed on winning at all costs, rather than winning through character, causes student-athletes to believe losing will cause society to label them as failures (Omar-Fauzee, et al. 2012). A winning emphasis put on high school sports programs by an administrator can invite less than exceptional character traits such as cheating, over aggressiveness, or even drug use to improve performance (Doty, 2006).

Background of the Problem

The importance of character education dates back to the founding of America, placing emphasis on character education as a cornerstone of democracy and civil society (Sojourner, 2012). History shows that calling for the implementation of character education, in some form or another, has long been a solution Americans turn to when faced with large spreading issues affecting the youth in society (Watz, 2011). During the mid 20th century; many schools took the direct action of limiting character education in the school setting, including school athletic programs (Sojourner, 2012). This turn away from character education changed in the early 1980's when funds began to be allocated at the direction of the president starting with President Regan, tripled by President Clinton, and again tripled by President Bush (Watz, 2011). This wave of support for character education influenced by key advocates raised awareness across the nation about the outcomes of character education in schools (Sojourner, 2012).

The field of character education goes back to the teachings and views of Kant, Comte, and Renouvier on education (Watz, 2011). Franklin, Mann, and McGuffey also were intricate in forming character education into the beginnings of the school system, specifically in America (Watz, 2011). Throughout the years, programs such as the YMCA and Boy Scouts of America have been established to help with the education of moral values to the youth of America (Watz, 2011).

Although substantial information exists regarding shaping young people into upstanding society members that make moral decisions, much exploration of character education in schools remains untouched. There are research-based programs available to organizations and institutions to guide the implementation of character education into school and athletic programs. With children attending school for nearly 900 hours a year; school entities such as athletics are

vital contributors to the development of youths' increasing values, morals, and exhibits of extraordinary character (Pala, 2011). Despite the available information on the effects of character and character education, little documentation about the role of high school activities director as it pertains to character education in high school sports research exists.

Problem Statement

Little is known about the role of the activities director in contributing to character education in high school sports.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore activities directors' role in character education programs for high school sports participants.

Significance Statement

This study could contribute to the existing literature that explores character education in high school student-athletes with an emphasis on the role of an activities director on character education in high school sports programs. Benefits of this study could potentially reach many stakeholders in high school sports including activities directors, coaches, advisors, parents, other school officials, and members of society that interact with young adults. Results gained from this study may be beneficial for defining the role of the activities director in the process of character education and fostering the development of strategies in guiding character education within their programs.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

This study will explore character education in high school athletes as it correlates to Lickona's Moral Development and Behavior Theory. Lickona suggests society as a whole is responsible for instilling values and morals in youth (Lickona, 1992). These values are

necessary because; character decline caused by families less often fostering growth in values and morals, the decline of work ethic mixed with other troubling consistencies in youth, and the will to bring back positive virtue which was once more abundant (Lickona, 1992). These moral standards guide choices made by young people and other individuals (Lickona, 1992).

Lickona's theory states character education must use an approach with a clear identity of appropriate character, needs to help students examine morality, and must help students to act upon the beliefs and values instilled (King, 2008). Right and wrong choices are then made based on the individual character developed by children (Lickona, 1992). Character education encompasses the cognitive, emotional, and moral action domains of a person (King, 2008). Moral education is also vital to democracies, as it works to empower youth to keep the common good (Lickona, 1992). The researcher will follow the beliefs stated in the above theory as this study is carried out.

Research Method

A qualitative research approach will be used in this study to better understand character education in the high school sports programs through the perspective of the activities director. The study will specifically target activities directors' expectations and role in character education in their schools. Creswell (2014) states qualitative research is designed to bring forward the views or actions of the sample surveyed. The process of conducting qualitative research includes purposeful questioning, organizing of data, review of data, coding of data, bringing the code to a description, representation of description and themes, and a final interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

The first phase of research will consist of one-on-one interviews with the activities directors, head coaches, and high school principals selected for the survey. Phase two will explore

documents from the activities directors and the school districts in which they are employed involving character education curriculum in the schools and sanctioned activities. The final phase of the study will invoke an unstructured focus group comprised of six participants from the initial one-on-one interview phase of the survey including, two head coaches, two activities directors, and two principals.

Rationale for Research Design

Qualitative research studies investigate the perspectives of the study's participants (Creswell, 2007). Field research located in the place where members of the sample interact with the phenomenon being studied a benefit of qualitative research design (Creswell, 2014).

Questioning will focus on participants' experiences with character education in high school athletics. Exploring activities director's experience, goals, and perceived benefits could broaden literature explaining their role in character education in schools. Exploring the views of principals and coaches who work with the activities directors in providing the high school athletic experience could also add to this literature.

Research Questions

The following questions will guide this study:

1. What expectations do activities directors' have of character education in high school athletics?
2. How do high school activities directors guide character education?
3. What are activities directors' expected outcomes of character education programs in high school athletics?

Definition of Terms

The following key terms are relevant in this study.

Activities Director: extra-curricular activities leader of the School responsible for the supervision and direction of all extra-curricular activities. (Valley City Public School District, 2013)

Character: the qualities one possess that make them identifiable from one another (Pala, 2011).

Character building efficacy (CBE): confidence a coach has in their ability to promote and foster positive character traits within athletic programs through his/her direct influence (Feltz, Chase, Moritz, Sullivan, 1999)

Character Education: the deliberate, proactive effort to develop good character in kids while teaching them right from wrong (Lickona, 1992)

Ethical Reasoning: belief that each person has standards defined by personal values used to reason between right and wrong when faced with a decision (Ethical Reasoning, 2017).

Life skills: abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of their daily lives (WHO, 2004)

Moral Development: the ways in which people distinguish right versus wrong as they grow, develop, change, and mature (Kohlberg, 1992)

Social Competence: the ability to maintain favorable interpersonal relationships through cooperation, responsiveness, assuming social responsibility, and behaving in friendly, warm, and other positive ways (Green & Rechis, 2006)

Limitations

The development of this study created boundaries and limitations that were not able to be controlled. One limitation of the study is the validity of the answers of the participants. The participants of this study are volunteers, who may be influenced by outside factors to give answers

that are not entirely accurate. Communication of privacy aims to draw more honest responses. Only participants available in the summer for an in-depth interview will take part in this study. Scheduling of in-person interviews around the participants' schedules will take place to resolve the lesser availability of participants in the summer. The researcher's ability to conduct the study and interpret the results are another limitation of this study.

Delimitations

This study will delimit high school activities director, principals, and head coaches from four high schools selected to complete the study. All four schools will come from generally the same demographic in the same Midwestern metro area. Participation in this study will delimit to activities directors who have at least five years of experience in high school athletics and are currently in charge of at least three high school interscholastic sports. Principals and head coaches will be delimited to have been in the same district for at least two years. Schools in this study have been delimited to include only schools who offer at least six different interscholastic sports for both male and female student-athletes. Some participants in this study may have worked with the researcher in the past. The strict protocol will be set in place to limit the impact this history may have on the study. Only schools who belong to their state high school league can qualify to participate in this study. Participants will not be selected based on gender, race, or any other demographics.

Significance of Study

This study may contribute to the existing research on character education in high school athletics while deepening the understanding of the activities director's role in this process. The results of this study will potentially benefit high school activities directors in developing strategies to implement or improve the character education taking place in athletic programs. Systematically,

these results may impact other stakeholders involved in high school sports such as the athletes, parents, teachers, coaches, and other district administrators.

Summary

Chapter one introduced character problems in the youth of society. Explanation of these community issues backed by research and statistics are provided. Other literature on this topic was presented to describe the problem and history of the phenomenon. This section continued by defining the key influences on the issue. Furthermore, the basis for future research on the topic of character education in high school athletics begins to unfold. Chapter one also explored Lickona's Theory of Behavior and Moral Development as the lens for the study. The details of research methods and rationale for these methods reside in this section. Research questions were developed, along with the limitations and delimitations the study will endure.

Chapter two will focus on reviewing the literature available on the topic. This literature review will be an in-depth analysis of the vast literature available on the subject of character education. During this literature review, much research will be investigated as it relates to character education of the high school athlete, specifically involving activities directors. Chapter three will go on to detail the parameters of the study including sample, setting, and selection.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Character education through high school sports and the role of the activities director will be explored in this section of the paper called the literature review. The literature review provides a background of current knowledge on the phenomena. Chapter 2 will include the following topics on character and character education: theoretical framework; historical perspective; character deficits; character influences; character education curriculum; character development in high school athletics; and benefits of character education. The literature review is a vital part of a research project as it explains what is known on the topic, validates a reason to examine the phenomena, and helps to identify theoretical perspectives to guide the research (University of Queensland, 2017).

Lickona's Moral Development and Behavior Theory

Lickona's Moral Development and Behavior Theory suggests society as a whole is responsible for instilling values and morals in children as they grow into young adults (Lickona, 1992). Moral standards taught to children and developed over time guide daily choices and decisions made throughout society (Lickona, 1992). Implementing curriculum promoting these values is necessary for purposeful decision making (Lickona, 1992). This curriculum is needed to counteract with a decrease in values and moral development fostering by parents and families and a decline of work ethic to bring real virtue back to the forefront of education where it had once been in its' original development (Lickona, 1992).

Lickona's theory states character education must use curriculum that clearly outlines the key components of positive character traits, fosters the development of morality through student

self-examination, and must empower students with the skills to turn their beliefs and values gained through this process into daily actions and decisions. (King, 2008). Development through such a process leads to more efficient decision-making between right and wrong choices based on the individual character developed through their childhood (Lickona, 1992). Right and wrong identification is developed through character education because it encompasses the cognitive, emotional, and moral action domains of a person as they grow through life experiences (King, 2008). Accomplishing these desired outcomes is the result of a school that is a morally sound community (Lickona, 1992). Moral education is also vital to American society as it pertains to democracies, as it works to empower youth to keep the common good of society as a whole (Lickona, 1992).

Character consists of the most common thoughts and actions by a person that were instilled at a young age and developed over time (Templenton Foundation, 1999). Lickona (1992) explains the importance of having an intentional curriculum in place in schools to develop character in its' students is essential due to the fact everything that happens in a school is developing the character of its' students either intentionally or unintentionally. The two primary goals society has of education are to develop society's youths' ability to make smart choices and grow skills needed to be good upstanding citizen, achievement of both goals occur through character education (Lickona, 1991). Lickona (1992) goes on to state that society as a whole wants their children to be able to face pressure situations and temptations with the ability to make the decision that is morally right.

Historical Perspective

Early philosophers and scholars formed views of character development as a part of the education system dating all the way back to the philosopher Socrates (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004).

Kant then followed up Socrates by linking the education system to the teaching of religious morality as a form of character education (Stock-Morton, 1988). Another historical figure in character education, Comte, believed moral growth and development through education stood in a category on its' own away from religious upbringing (Stock-Morton, 1988). Also in France was a philosopher, Renouvier, who stated moral development through education needed implementation due to depleting character traits that were once found such as justice and respect (Stock-Morton, 1988).

America's founding based itself on the belief that developing character through education was a vital part of maintaining a democracy throughout its' future (Watz, 2012). Franklin (1749) left his mark on the school system by fighting for a universal system in the country. Several education institutions were also grown and developed by Franklin (Franklin, 1749). The foundation of the education curriculum was established with the goal to make students both wise and moral (Lickona, 1991).

Character development and education continued to change over time. Character education in the form of citizenship became a part of schools in the 1800's (Sojourner, 2012). The 1960's and 1970's brought forth the issues of civil rights and feminism (Sojourner, 2012). These topics showed the importance of bringing character education back into the curriculum in America's schools (Lickona, 1991).

Harvard psychologist Kohlberg came to the forefront of character experts in the early 1970's (Sojourner, 2012). Kohlberg (1976) introduced his theory of natural stages of development in moral reasoning throughout the aging of a person. Studies began to show a direct correlation between moral reasoning discussions in classrooms and growth in students' ability to make morally sound choices (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989). Moral dilemma discussions then

started to show up in various classes as part of the education curriculum (Sojourner, 2012). Kohlberg (1976) continued to work on moral reasoning in high schools, prisons, and eventually college research centers.

In the mid-1990's America pushed character education programs in schools as a way to promote moral values with ties to citizenship (Lickona, 1996). Starting in the 1990's more studies were being raised that showed character development through sports existed (Bredemeier & Shields, 1995). Good character is something necessary for people to be a good human being (Lickona, 1996). Schools that show the aspects of good character can foster better results both emotionally and intellectually (Lickona, 1996). The Arizona Sports Summit (1999) recommended the following strategies for implementing character education to high school athletics: apply a code of conduct outlining behaviors that are expected; discuss the contents of the code of conduct with all players; clearly state the responsibility to build character in the job descriptions of all involved with the sports programming; and create consequences for poor character displays that are not followed through with.

In the mid-1990's Lickona (1996) attributed the need for character education to the following problems.

“As is usually the case, society's problems are most visibly reflected in its youth. Ten troubling youth trends, which appear in large measure to cut across national borders, indicate the dimensions of the difficulty:

1. Rising youth violence
2. Increasing dishonesty (lying, cheating, and stealing)
3. Greater disrespect for parents, teachers, and other legitimate authority figures
4. Increasing peer cruelty

5. A rise in bigotry and hate crime
6. The deterioration of language
7. A decline in the work ethic
8. Increasing self-centeredness, accompanied by declining personal and civic responsibility
9. A surge of self-destructive behaviors such as premature sexual activity, substance abuse, and suicide.
10. Growing ethical illiteracy, including ignorance or moral knowledge as basic as the Golden Rule and the tendency to engage in behaviors injurious to self or others without thinking it wrong.” (Lickona, 1996, p. 1)

Character Deficits

The increase in harmful behavior and a decrease of moral intuition demonstrated by today’s youth is creating a gap between potential and reality in the success of society (Sojourner, 2012). The increase in negative behaviors, especially in schools, is a result of society lacking shared values (Britzman, 2005). The number of compromising acts showing weak character by society’s high school-aged youth continues to rise on a yearly basis compared to that of earlier times (Scifres, 2009). Bullying in schools is on the rise and occurs 1 or more times a week in 43.5% of high schools (Hayes, Lewis, and Robinson, 2011). Furthermore, the number of young people who believe comprising acts can be carried out without consequences continues to grow from year to year (Scifres, 2009).

Teenagers today are more vulnerable to freely available forms of dangerous and harmful influences through media and technology that was not available to past generations (Pala, 2011). The ever-changing world of social media exposes high school age youth to negative influences

that are more readily broadcasted by the day (Pala, 2011). There is a gap in knowledge present between past generations who did have these forces and the education needed to provide today's adolescence the support to build the skills to handle these impacts in a positive manner (Scrifes, 2009).

These influences mixed with the lack of moral development are creating young adults that are not prepared to be successful after their time in high school (Josephson, 2002). Research has shown 24% of high schoolers do not have proper preparation for their first year of college (Klein, 2011). High school students also lack the mental process to define what is morally correct, lack the strong beliefs to act on what is right, and Concerns about displays of character deficits in sports include not respecting officials, actions outside of the rules, and in some cases incidences of violence (Dada, 2016).

Character Influences

Reports indicate the increasing instances of negative displays of character shown by today's professional athletes directly affect actions presented by younger athletes, both on and off the field (Dada, 2016). The correlation between these two factors continues to increase in response to daily reports of professional athletes making poor character choices being broadcasted nationwide (Doty & Lumpikin, 2010). The year 2016 has brought forth more media coverage showing society the displays of poor character choices by athletes and coaches both on and off the field than ever before, partly due to more readily available access to behind the scenes material by social media and other sources (Dada, 2016). A survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation shows 74% of youth surveyed report it to be standard practice for a professional athlete to yell at an official (Ireland, 2011). These daily presentations of professional athletes showing character unfit

of being an example for young people influence the actions of those that see it (Doty & Lumpkin, 2010).

Outside forces emphasizing the importance on the outcome of competitions have an adverse impact on high school student-athletes in sports and causes a heightened need for character education curriculum (Chansem, Geok, Latif, Nazarudin, Omar-Fauzee, Sputra, Sutresna, & Taweesuk, 2012). High School student-athletes often have a feeling of pressure from society placed on them to win at all costs (Omar-Fauzee et al., 2012). Young athletes see professional athletes rewarded with more money and fame the more they win regardless of the decisions they make or the character they show on and off the field (Chansem, 2012). The influence of importance placed on winning at all costs, rather than winning through character, causes student-athletes to believe losing will cause society to label them as failures and lead to decisions made by the high school student-athletes of improper moral reasoning (Omar-Fauzee et al., 2012). Displays of negative character need to be balanced out by positive character influences on society's children (Dada, 2016).

Adult behavior has a direct impact on the character development of high school-aged athletes (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). United States parents are not helping to develop character in their children as much as they were in the past (Sojourner, 2011). Parents are more often too busy with their work, caught up in themselves, have unrealistic expectations of their children, are absent, or have some other form of hardship to take a significant role in the development of their children (Sojourner, 2011). Levine (2012) states parents often do not recognize the actual needs of their children. These actions are resulting in parents turning to other people or programs to develop the character of their children (Levine, 2012).

Character Education Curriculum

The role of character education in schools is to improve students' ability to be responsible young people through the modeling and instruction of moral reasoning and values (Pala, 2011). The impact of character education on the curriculum differs from a single lesson to complete school integration (Berkowitz and Bier, 2004). Character education curriculum has increased across America while implementing comprehensive character education programs in schools that develop students' ethical and moral reasoning (Pala, 2011). Programs such as "SUPER" and "Going for the Goal" have been developed, marketed, and distributed in various environments to spread character education (Glassey et al., 2015).

Although knowledge on the effects on society caused by declining character is evident; having good character cannot be assumed and needs to develop through an intentional process (Pala, 2011). Specifically, to counter the rising incidences of poor character behaviors, students need character education curriculum that centers on the development of social competence and moral reasoning (Butts & Cruzeriro, 2005). Character education curriculum needs to take into account America's youth are facing different and more problems than older generations have, making it necessary to develop the skills to deal with any situation in a manner of high character through the ever-changing influences around today's high school aged student-athletes (Pala, 2011).

Schools are a vital location for character education curriculum to reach high school student-athletes due to the 900 hours a year they spend in school and other school affiliated programming (Pala, 2011). School-based character education programs provide alternative results that not achievable in a home-based program due to the different groupings of students working together with various school officials versus the limited interactions with family members found in the

home (Cheung, 2010). Hayes, Lewis, and Robinson (2011) emphasize the importance of schools implementing a comprehensive character education curriculum that encompasses all programs associated with the school, sports included, to gain the optimal positive results from program implementation. As part of character education in schools, students need programs to develop their social competence (Cheung & Lee, 2010). Strengthening the social interaction knowledge of students can be done through purposeful character development program curriculum (Cheung & Lee, 2010).

Despite the knowledge on the benefits of character education, schools face challenges to implementing such programs in their districts. One challenge facing the implementation of character education in schools is the increased importance placed on standardized test scores to the point where teacher salaries are being affected by the scores achieved by their students (Sojourner, 2012). Schools are having to cut programs designed to promote the overall development of their students to focus on raising test scores that affect their schools' financial situations (Pala, 2011). Other challenges include the steady decline in government funding per pupil given to schools districts (Soujourner, 2012). Character education limits include lack of global definition and standards accepted by all (Berkowitz & Bier, 2006). Many character education curriculums that are in place are generic and not specifically designed to fit best the population they are being used with (Hayes et al., 2011).

Schools need to gather stakeholders and define a character education curriculum that best fits the specific population of their school district (Hayes et al., 2011). In a survey of parents, 70% reported wanting schools to include training on identifying what is right versus wrong in their curriculum, and 85% responded with the desire for values education in schools (Sojourner, 2012). The curriculum must be widespread throughout the schools and all of the programs involved with

it (Bulach & Butler, 2002). Once the curriculum is set training for all school staff members that will be implementing this training to students, either in the classroom or through participation in school-sanctioned athletics must take place (Berkowitz & Beir, 2006). Real life examples through hands-on learning are the best practices to gain desired results from the curriculum (Berkowitz & Beir, 2006).

Benefits of Character Education

Character education enriches students' ability to understand and make the right choices based on the development of core beliefs (U.S Department of Education, 2008). Overall, extensive efforts within schools to implement character education results in higher morals and test scores throughout the entire school, as well as leads to less behavior-related incidents reported (Character Education Partnership, 2010). Intentional development of character promotes ethical decision making that affects both the individual and society as a whole (Pala, 2011). Schools engaging in comprehensive character education have become a safer environment for students, faculty, and the community to be a part of, with a significantly lower number of discipline referrals than schools without such programs in place (Sojourner, 2012). Berkowitz and Bier (2005) cited over 50 readily available character education program for purchase and immediate implementation that prove to show positive results.

Professionals in the field of teaching have documented students' level of character being a reliable indicator of their academic success on school-based and statewide standardized tests (Pappano, 2013). The students' level of knowledge at the time of the assessment is often a less accurate indicator of their overall academic performance than their level of character (Pappano, 2013). A 2003 study showed students in schools who had implemented a more comprehensive approach to character education tested higher on academic assessments than their age level peers

in schools that did not have such programs in place (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, and Smith 2003). Another study by Park and Peterson (2006) reported results of up to a 16% gain in achievement on assessments after implementing comprehensive character education programs into the school versus the same students' scores before implementation of the program took place. This progress took place during a short intervention period following the first assessment (Park & Peterson, 2006).

A study carried out by Marshall, Caldwell, and Foster (2011) resulted in an overall school improvement that included increases in moral behavior along with improvement in test scores in the subjects of reading and math. Reading and science test scores also increased in other schools who instituted an integrated character education program into their school as part of their curriculum (Sojourner, 2012). Benninga et al. (2006) reported schools with a more extensive character development curriculum in their schools achieved higher scores on state standardized testing. Problem-solving, time management, goal setting, dealing with success and failure, and performing under pressure are all character traits that can be developed through these programs as well (Glassey et al., 2015).

Character Development in High School Athletics

Authentic character education enriches all programs a school district has to offer, including high school activities (Hayes, Lewis, & Robinson III, 2011). Without intentional development an athlete's level of moral reasoning decreases in sports the longer, they are a part of them (Doty & Lumpkin, 2010). An active program designed to develop a base of moral reasoning through all stages of development is vital to the elaboration of a morally just person through athletics (Pala, 2011).

Results show that positive character traits develop through the participation of athletics in the high school setting (Parker & Siehl, 2004). The relationship between character development and athletic participation is a topic that has received much attention throughout the world (Dodge & Robertson, 2004). High school students involved in sports and other extracurricular activities miss less school, have higher graduation rates, participate in less illegal substance use, and have less behavior related issues in school than students who are not (Josephine Institute Center for Sports Ethics, 2006).

High school athletes who participate in sports gain both psychological and social health benefits in addition to the physical benefits that often drive the motivation of participation (Charity, Eime, Harvey, Payne, and Young, 2013). Specifically, increases in positive character traits are a result of participation in high school athletics when a designed character education curriculum is in place (Parker and Stiehl, 2004). When positive character traits, such as perseverance, are taught through athletics and combined with other positive values young athletes are better prepared to be successful when faced with future challenges in life (Chansem, Geok, Latif, Nazarudin, Omar-Fauzee, Sputra, Sutresna, & Taweasuk, 2012).

High schoolers who enroll in sports are entitled to a program designed to intentionally build positive character attributes (Doty & Lumpkin, 2010). High school athletics does not automatically create character, rather is the result of a purposeful plan to facilitate character growth in its' individuals (Austin, 2010). Optimal results of building character in young athletes through sports do not occur when there is an influence of winning being the most important result of participation (Barez, 2008). Coaches and administrators must develop environments that foster student-athlete growth in the areas of ethics and moral reasoning to achieve the desired results of

character education curriculum (Stoner, 2004). Coaches and Administrators must also display and reinforce the character lessons they are teaching (Hellison, 2003)

Studies show coaches can influence student-athletes to strive to display good character traits through instruction and showing good character in practices and competitions (Chansem, 2012). Mentoring and community service programs are two vital parts of an effective character education curriculum designed to enrich the development of character in athletics programs at all levels (Hayes, Lewis, and Robinson III, 2011). Character education develops through sport by reinforcing sportsmanship and fair play in the athletic setting so that it can be carried over throughout life (Lumpkin, 2009).

Skills found to help athletes succeed in sports are the same skills found to guide successful people in other aspects of their lives (Glasse, Hagger, Hardcastle, and Tye, 2015). In addition to displays of active character, sports participation results in an increase in leadership skills used to impact the displays of character of the others surrounding the participant in the school and society (Chansem, 2012). High school athletics provide real-life situations needing moral reasoning to make a decision on how to act, which is a simulation of daily situations that will arise throughout a lifetime in society (Dada, 2016). Being involved in high school athletics enhances a student's interest level in school while influencing them to stay away from harmful actions (Chansem, 2012).

Individuals participating in sports are more likely to develop the leadership skills needed to be a productive citizen of society (Wright and Cote, 2003). Sports develop life skills in high school student-athletes, along with character traits including discipline, sportsmanship, teamwork, and time management skills (Lumpkin & Stokowski, 2011). A person of high character shows their high moral values in all settings, including sports (Doty & Lumpkin, 2010). Parents of

students who participate in sports report noticeable increases in their children's' development both socially and personally (Charity, Eime, Harvey, Payne, and Young, 2013). Without this direct enhancement plan, athletes may show 'gamesmanship' to gain an advantage over their opponent (Dada, 2016).

Role of Activities Director in Character Education

For a character education program to be successful all stakeholders, including activities directors, need to be involved in the process (Pala, 2011). Directors and coaches of athletics must support ethical reasoning while influencing students to participate in sports and strive for excellence in all that they do (Chansem, 2012). Activities directors joined with other school officials, can team up with other community members or programs to provide additional role models and opportunities that support character development in and around the community (Pala, 2011).

High school activities directors are responsible for being proactive in initiating character development within the sports programming in their institutions (Camire & Trudel, 2008). An emphasis on winning put on high school sports by the high school activities director can invite less than exceptional character traits such as cheating, over aggressiveness, or even drug use to improve performance (Doty, 2006). Implementation of character development in high school athletics from the activities director yields better results from their participants while reducing incidents caused by lack of character (Camire & Trudel, 2008).

The leadership of each sports program, such as the head coaches, are directed by the high school activities director on how to run that particular program. Coaches at the high school level qualify to hold their position based on their ability to lead a program that builds the character of their athletes (Chansem, 2012). Pre-season meetings with students and parents should emphasize

topics dealing with high character and morals (Chansem, 2012). Moral and ethical behaviors need to be reinforced through praise and modeling from above (Lumpkin, 2009).

Summary

Chapter two provided the available literature relating to character education of high school athletes and the role of activities director in this process was reviewed. Chapter two examined the theoretical framework of Lickona's Moral Development and Behavior Theory. A review of historical literature relating to the topic followed. Character deficits, influences on character, character education curriculum, character in high school athletics, and the role of activities director on character education were all explored. Chapter 3 will detail the exact methodology in place to further conduct this study.

Chapter 3

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore an activities director's role in character education for high school sports participants. Chapter three will include the research design, research setting, sample, selection of participants, instrumentations, assumptions, procedures, data analysis, and chapter summary. Both the design for the research and the reasoning behind the particular type of research chosen will be explained. Research questions which will lead investigation will be detailed. The settings in which the study will take place will be described. Sampling method and selection of participants will be addressed. Chapter 3 will continue to explain the role of the researcher, as well as the instrumentation the researcher will use to carry out this study. Informed consent, confidentiality, and ethical considerations such as how the researcher will address privacy of participants will be discussed. Compliance with the Institutional Review Board is a process that will be reviewed. Lastly, all data collection, analysis procedures and methodology to be used will be found in this chapter.

Research Design

A qualitative research approach will be utilized in this study to better understand character education in the high school sports programs, with an emphasis on the role of the activities director. This study will specifically target activities directors' expectations and role in character education in their schools. Creswell (2014) states, qualitative research is designed to bring forward the beliefs or actions of the surveyed sample. The process of conducting qualitative research includes purposeful questioning, organizing of data, review of data, coding of data, bringing the code to a description, using the descriptions to pull away themes, and a final interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

The first phase of research will consist of one-on-one interviews with activities directors, coaches, and principals selected for the survey. Phase two will explore crucial documents from the activities departments and the school districts that employ them. The final phase of the study constructs a focus group made up of two activities directors, two principals, and two coaches from the initial one-on-one interview phase of the survey.

Rationale for Research Design

Qualitative research studies investigate the perspectives of the study's participants (Creswell, 2007). Field research located in the place where members of the sample interact with the phenomenon being studied a benefit of qualitative research design (Creswell, 2014). Questioning methods focus on participants' experiences with character education in high school athletics. Exploring activities director's experience, goals, and perceived benefits could broaden literature explaining their role in character education in schools. Exploring the views of principals and coaches who work with the activities directors in providing the high school athletic experience could also add to this literature.

Research Questions

The following questions will guide this study:

1. What expectations do activities directors' have of character education in high school athletics?
2. How do high school activities directors guide character education?
3. What are activities directors' expected outcomes of character education programs in high school athletics?

Research Setting

The settings to be used for this study will be metro area high schools in a Midwestern state high school league. The Example State High School League (ESHSL) established in 1916 (Example State High School League, 2016). 500 schools make up ESHSL, involving more than 200,000 high school students (ESHSL, 2016). Schools in Example State High School League join the league on a yearly basis.

School A

School A currently enrolls 457 students from ninth through twelfth grade (School A, 2017). Sixteen different sporting events are offered through School A (Minnesota State High School League, 2017). A 2011 survey of students in grade 11 at School A recorded that the students were 57% female, 8.2% enrolled in special education, and 15.5% were receiving free or reduced lunch support (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017).

As of 2015, the Town School A resides in reported a population of 6,918 (United States Census Bureau, 2015). This number is up 3.9% in the five years before this statistic. United States Census Bureau (2015) reports, of the total population 93% live in the urban area versus 7% considered rural. As of July 1, 2010, City A's residents consisted of 10% children under the age of five years old, 30% children under that age of eighteen years old, 10.9% over the age of 65 years old, and were 50.4% female. City A's diversity filled with 94.2% of the population reporting being white alone (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Education of the population of City A over 25 years old consisted of a high school degree for 93.9% of the population and a bachelor's degree for 26.8% (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Income in City A had a median of \$71,964 per household (United States Census Bureau, 2015).

School B

The enrolment of school B is currently 1,924 (School B, 2017). This enrollment includes students in grades 10-12 at the high school, and students in grade 9 split up at two different junior high schools based on the geographic location each student lives. A 2011 survey of students in their junior year at School B found 51.6% of students were male, 27.2% of students received free or reduced-price lunches, and 13.3% of students were on an individualized education plan (MDE, 2017).

The official population of town B as of 2015 was 39,981 people, showing a 7.8% increase from the five years prior (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Of the total population, the ages range from 10% five years old and under, 30.2% under 18 years old, and 6.8% of the population being 65 years or older. United States Census Bureau (2015) goes on to report 51.2% of the people in City B are female, and 77% are white alone. The other cultural demographics in the city are made up of 10.3% Asian, 4.3% Black or African American, and 1.2% American Indian or Alaska Native. Of the population in City B 25 years or older, 92.7% have a high school diploma, and 37.5% hold a bachelor's degree. The median household income in City B is \$78,731 while 6.6% of persons are in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2015).

Sample

The participants in this study will be made up of activities directors, coaches, and principals at metro high schools in a Midwestern state. Criterion and purposeful sampling will select participants. Criterion sampling is used by the researcher to develop parameters required by members of the sample (Patton, 1999). Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to explore a sample which has expertise and experience in the desired area of the problem at hand (Creswell, 2007). The parameters used in this study will narrow candidates to include activities

directors in charge of at least three different sports in their school district and at least five years of experience in high school athletics.

Coaches invited to the study must be the head coach of at least one sport and have coached in their current district for 2 or more years. Principals selected for this research will have been in their respective district for two years or more. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research needs to include at least three and up to 12 samples to validate findings. In compliance with Creswell's theory, an activities director, principal, and head coach will be selected from each school described in the setting to give the researcher a sample size of 6 people.

Selection of Participants

Recruitment of participants will be based on availability during the time of the study and within the criterion detailed above. Contact information will be found for qualified candidates for the study before the completion of purposeful sampling. Participants who the researcher knows to be experienced and qualified under the parameters listed in the criterion for the study may be selected to help avoid the limitation of false information previously listed. This process will lead to the acquiring of participants that may have worked with the researcher in the past. Confidentiality and professional settings will be used to avoid conflict of interest during the research process caused by past relationships.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary tool used for collecting data and all other aspects of the research process in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2007). Before beginning research, the researcher must go through the approval process and protocol as well as obtain other proper approval at locations where the research will take place. At the beginning of the study, the

researcher will identify individual biases and assumptions that may have an effect on carrying out and interpreting the research (Creswell, 2007). In dealing with the participants, the researcher must have an open line of communication creating a comfortable environment for the participants as they are informed of the confidentiality of the study. It is the responsibility of the researcher to develop research strategies and questions for the interviews for consistency throughout the course of the research project.

Instrumentation

Qualitative research includes using interviews, conversations, and observations to collect data from the sample (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenological research calls for open-ended interview questions to be used as the primary instrument in this research (Moustakas, 1994), which will be used in one-on-one interviews.

Assumptions

The researcher enters this research proposal with assumptions. The first assumption by the researcher is that the Winona State IRB will accept the proposal of this research project. In addition to IRB approval, the researcher assumes each setting site will give permission to conduct interviews on their premises. The researcher has begun permission processes at multiple settings to prepare for access.

Informed Consent, Confidentiality, and Ethical Considerations

Respecting the rights of participants in a study has long been an important aspect of research (Backhouse, Cori, and Day, 2000). The informed consent process and forms will be explained in detail to the participants before being agreed upon and signed. Participants will also receive a guarantee of confidentiality, contact information for the researcher, and copies of consent forms after being signed (Creswell, 2007). All forms collected in this research will be

kept in a secure location to assure privacy promises are upheld. The right to withdraw from the study at any time will be explained to the participants.

Confidentiality will be discussed at the beginning of the process and readdressed throughout as needed for participant confidence. Any and all information and materials obtained from the participants will be considered confidential and be handled with the privacy protocols in place. Information given that may expose the identity of the participant will be omitted from publication to ensure anonymity.

Data collected electronically will be stored on a password-protected laptop throughout the duration of the research. Information obtained in hard copy form will be kept in a locked file cabinet both when not in use and at the end of the research process. After the duration of the study, all information will be kept in the secure locations above for three years, at which time all information from the research will be destroyed.

Data Collection

Data collection will begin to take place after review and approval from the Winona State University Institutional Review Board. Research proposal processes for school districts involved in the study will be submitted following IRB approval. Approval from each entity may require the approval of the other, in which case a permission upon approval form will be obtained from the school districts and submitted for IRB approval.

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews will be conducted with each activities director, principal, and head coach in the sample. Questions in these in-depth interviews will inquire about the activities directors' role in character education through high school athletics. One-on-one interviews with open-ended questions are meant to bring forth lived experiences during the interview (Moustakas,

1994). Interviews will be scheduled for a 45 minutes block in the interviewee's school of work. Each meeting will take place in a private location of either a conference room or office. Open-ended questions will be presented with the answers being recorded and later transcribed. Follow up questions and redirecting will not be allowed by the researcher to keep consistency across the sample.

Data Analysis

All data collected from the research will first be coded. Coding of the data will allow for analysis of common themes. Once coding is performed, repetitive codes will be combined to discover common areas or themes. Carefully coding and decoding data from qualitative research allows the researcher to combine the shared beliefs and experiences of the entire sample (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Further analysis of identified ideas will then take place.

Limitations

The development of this study created boundaries and limitations that were not able to be controlled. One limitation of the study is the validity of the answers of the participants. The participants of this study are volunteers, who may be influenced by outside factors to give answers that are not entirely accurate. Communication of privacy aims to draw more honest responses. Only participants available in the spring for an in-depth interview will be used in this study. Scheduling of in-person interviews around the participants' schedules will take place to resolve the lesser availability of participants. The researcher's ability to conduct the study and interpret the results are another limitation of this study.

Delimitations

This study will be delimited to high school activities director, principals, and head coaches from high schools selected to complete the study. All schools will come from generally the same

demographic in the same Midwestern metro area. Participation in this study will be delimited to activities directors who have at least five years of experience in high school athletics and are currently in charge of at least three high school interscholastic sports. Principals and head coaches will be delimited to have been in the same district for at least two years. Schools in this study have been delimited to include only schools who offer at least six different interscholastic sports for both male and female student-athletes. Some participants in this study may have worked with the researcher in the past. The strict protocol will be set in place to limit the impact this history may have on the study. Only schools who belong to their state high school league will be chosen. Participants will not be selected based on gender, race, or any other demographics.

Summary

Chapter three included the research design, research setting, sample, selection of participants, instrumentations, assumptions, procedures, and data analysis. The design for the research and the reasoning behind the particular type of research chosen were explained. The role of the researcher, as well as the instrumentation the researcher will use to carry out this study, were examined. Informed consent, confidentiality, and ethical considerations were discussed. All data collection, analysis procedures, and methodology to be used to conduct qualitative research on the role of the activities director on character education through high school sports were examined in this chapter. Chapter 4 will present the findings and results of the study.

Chapter 4

Result/Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore activities directors' role in character education programs for high school sports participants. Chapter four will restate the problem, review the research design, and summarizes the demographics of the participants. Also included in Chapter four are findings from in-depth one-on-one interviews. Included in the results are the identification of themes from the opinions and experiences of the participants.

Review of Problem Statement

Little is known about the role of the activities director in contributing to character education in high school athletics.

Review of Research Design

A qualitative research approach was utilized in this study to better understand character education in the high school sports programs, with an emphasis on the role of the activities director. This study will specifically target activities directors' expectations and role in character education in their schools. Creswell (2014) states, qualitative research is designed to bring forward the beliefs or actions of the surveyed sample. The process of conducting qualitative research includes purposeful questioning, organizing of data, review of data, coding of data, bringing the code to a description, using the descriptions to pull away themes, and a final interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

The research consisted of one-on-one interviews with activities directors, coaches, and principals selected for the survey.

The following questions were used to guide this study:

1. What expectations do activities directors' have of character education in high school athletics?
2. How do high school activities directors guide character education?
3. What are activities directors' expected outcomes of character education programs in high school athletics?

Participants responded to seven open-ended, one-on-one in-depth interview that helped the participants share options on experience on character development through high school athletics. From these answers, four main themes were discovered that explained common opinions and experiences.

Participant Demographics

Six participants were selected to complete the one-on-one interviews of this study. These participants all had 10 or more years of job experience. Included in the sample were a head coach, principal, and activities director from each of two different school districts. Table 1 displays the demographics of these participants.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Ethnicity	Male	Female	Total
Caucasion	3	1	4
African American	1		1
Asian Amercian	1		1
Years of Experience	Male	Female	Total
0-5			
6-10			
11-15		1	1
16-20	2		2

21-25	2		2
26-30	1		1
Role in School	Male	Female	Total
Head Coach	2		2
Principal	1	1	2
Activities Director	2		2
Total	5	1	6

Findings

One-on-One In-depth Interviews

Answers of participants were sorted into theme-based categories after being coded for common thoughts and experiences. Themes extracted from at least half of the participants are listed below with the corresponding transcription from each participants interview.

Table 2

Summary Table of Themes

Theme	Theme Description	% Of Participants Discussing
1	Character Deficits	83%
2	Community Involvement	83%
3	Leadership Development	66%
4	Yearly Coaching/Program Evaluations	83%

Theme included below are detailed with the specific interview question that led to the discovery of each theme. Textual quotes from the direct in-depth one-on-one interviews are included for each participant adding to the information and discovery of the theme. Only quotes from participants that apply to the specific theme are included within each section.

Emerging Theme 1: Character Deficits

The interview questions that lead to the following theme are as follows:

Interview Question 1: Describe the biggest concerns you have about the actions of high school student-athletes?

- P1: Students these days do not have the same upbringing as students in the past have had, so those lessons that parents used to teach kids aren't happening as much. Because of this, we can't really assume that kids are going to come in and understand what character or leadership is. Especially in a district like ours with our demographics we really a wide range of character from student to student. **need to have programs in place to bridge the gap and help these kids develop the character they need to be successful in and out of our program.
- P2: On a daily basis I deal with students that either do not know wrong from right or do not think it applies to them. For the most part these students do not care about the consequences or have a future plan in place to lead them to have goals they strive for.
- P3: I deal with a much wider variety of violations that I did 10-15 years ago. These days there are so much more online displays that get sent to my office whether if be cyber-bullying, pictures from a party, etc. Technology is everywhere these days and teenage kids are not always equipped with skills to manage having this all at their finger tips all of the time.
- P4: Over the years I have seen the hard-work and commitment level of my student-athletes drop tremendously. Kids are always looking for what is in it for them right this second instead of looking at the big picture. The "team first" mentality of kids is few and far between.
- P6: I see a lot of student-athletes who do not think the rules apply to them. They think they are above the law and can get away with things just because they are an athlete.

Emerging Theme 2: Community Involvement

The interview questions that lead to the following theme are as follows:

Interview Question 2: Describe some of the best programs you have in place for developing character traits in high school student-athletes?

- P1: We try to really get the kids out and give back to the community. We have the kids help out with youth sports camps and practices as much as we can. The kids wear their jerseys and are told they are representing their team and school. The younger kids really look up to those guys and remember those moments when they get older. We also sell salt as a fundraiser, but deliver it to the homes and carry it in wherever they want us to put it. This is a way we are getting something for our program but also providing a service for the community.

- P2: The best thing we do to develop character is get our student-athletes involved in the community of our school and town. We have groups that work with special needs students, read at the elementary, volunteer around town, and so much more. The programs that we offer like these really do a great job of developing the sense of belonging and giving back to the people in them.
- P4: We get our kids out in the community. We do a meet the team night where the community and youth can come interact with our players. We also adopt a highway and do various volunteer stuff in the community.
- P5: Our mentorship programs of our older kids and captains helping out the youth programs in the community is huge. The younger kids really look up to the older kids, and it shows the older kids that what they do is being seen.
- P6: Giving back to the community has got to be one the top things we do for our kids. They are involved in youth sports programs, adopt a highway, reading at the elementary and other volunteer opportunities around town.

Emerging Theme 3: Leadership Development Programs

The interview questions that lead to the following theme are as follows:

Interview Question 4: Describe the most effective way(s) the activities director in your school leads to character development for student-athletes.

- P2: The activities director at our school will send student-athletes to a leadership workshop where they get to do activities with kids from other schools that focus on building character and bringing it out of people around them.
- P4: Our activities director helps to lead a conference summit of leaders across the different schools. At these events, the kids go and kind of get to know each other while they work through different leadership and character building topics. Usually, they have some outside person or something come in and lead the activities, some professional.
- P5: The activities director does a great job with our captains and leaders and providing them opportunities for growth. This happens around our school with sending them different places to do community work, but the most effective one is sending them to the conference leadership workshop, where they learn about character and meet other student-athletes like themselves from other schools.
- P6: As the activities director I organize and send our student-athletes to various leadership events. We take the captains of each sport but if they overlap we have coaches pick other students to attend. At these events, they get to network with other future leaders and well as learn lessons on leadership and character.

Emerging Theme 4: Yearly Coaching/Program Evaluations

The interview questions that lead to the following theme are as follows:

Interview Question 6: Explain how the activities director guides character development within individual school athletic programs?

- P1: The biggest way our AD is involved in what we do is through our end of the season evaluation process. As part of this review, there is a section about building our student-athletes off of the field. There are things such as build character, keep track of grades, how we handle behavior and so on. During this meeting, the AD will bring up any ideas or concerns they have with these sections as a part of the meeting and the entire evaluation process.
- P3: As an AD I am constantly evaluating and monitoring programs and coaches. I try to get to as many games and practices as I can so that at the end of the year I have something to base my evaluation off of. The biggest part of this evaluation to me is are the kids having a blast playing this sport, and are the kids getting something out of this besides just the sport itself. I try to get with coaches throughout the season when I see things, and then also do an end of the year sit down evaluation meeting with them.
- P4: The only time the AD really gets involved in what we do is if something bad comes up during the season with behavior issues, otherwise he waits until the end of the year coaching evaluation. There he goes over everything around the program. He doesn't really get into much depth about character development specifically, but asks what we do as coaches to make sure we are teaching life lessons and such.
- P5: Also, the AD commences at end of the season sit down conferences with each head coach. As a part of this meeting, the AD goes over different programs each sport participates in with their players to help develop them as entire people. I know first-hand being as though I sit in on these meetings as the district administrator rep since the AD does not hold an admin license.
- P6: Specific programs are dealt with from program to program, but I do complete an end of the year meeting with each coach to go over the different things they do in other programs to help with character.

Summary

Chapter four first restated the problem, reviewed the research design, and summarized the demographics of the participants. Also included in Chapter four were the findings from the in-depth one-on-one interview, which the researcher conducted with six participants. Four key emergent themes came forward throughout the study: (a) Character Deficits, (b) Community

Involvement, (c) Leadership Development Programs, and (d) Yearly Coaching/Program Evaluations. Chapter four reported and provided evidence on these themes. Chapter five will include interpretation of the findings, comparisons, implications for character development, and recommendations for future research on the topic.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This study explored the role of activities directors on character development through high school athletics. The chapters leading up have covered an introduction, problem statement, overview, literature review, explanation of methodology, and review of findings. This study showed the importance of character deficits in adolescence, acts occurring from these deficits, and what schools should be doing to raise the level of character. This study also demonstrated what activities directors are doing to affect character development through their athletics programs.

A qualitative research design was used to explore the role of the activities director in character education through high school athletics. These three questions were used to drive the study.

1. What expectations do activities directors' have of character education in high school athletics?
2. How do high school activities directors guide character education?
3. What are activities directors' expected outcomes of character education programs in high school athletics?

Data collection was used in one-on-one in-depth interviews with six participants from two different settings. Four main themes emerged from the investigation: (1) Character Deficits, (2)

Community Involvement, (3) Leadership Development Programs, and (4) Yearly Coaching/Program Evaluations.

Character Deficits

Five of the six participants in the study discussed the changes they have seen in character of youth throughout their careers. Negative acts are on the rise and having to be dealt with more than in the past due to lacking the character traits needed to make good choices. The number of compromising acts showing weak character by society's high school-aged youth continues to rise on a yearly basis compared to that of earlier times (Scifres, 2009). The researcher recommends character deficits awareness becomes a larger point of emphasis from activities directors to their coaches.

Community Involvement

Participants highlighted the value of community involvement as it pertains to character development through high school athletics. Participants of the study gave high regards to this activity that involves the many participants and teaches lessons on character. Activities directors joined with other school officials, can team up with other community members or programs to provide additional role models and opportunities that support character development in and around the community (Pala, 2011). It is the researcher supports these beliefs, and support activities directors to require community outreach and involvement as part of each athletic programs policies.

Leadership Development Programs

Participants identified leadership development programs being a strong program offered by activities directors for their student-athletes. The experiences brought back by these individuals has been deemed positive. It is the researchers recommendation that these programs be offered by

the activities directors for more populations than captains and team leaders so that students from all demographics and levels are able to have the opportunities to develop character traits through these programs.

Yearly Coaching/Program Evaluation

Participants discussed yearly evaluations from the activities director to the head coach on their respective program(s). Not much detail was reported as to how this evaluation pertained to the development of character in their programs. Pre-season meetings with students and parents should emphasize topics dealing with high character and morals (Chansem, 2012). The researcher recommends more of an emphasis in yearly evaluations on specific programs intentionally designed to develop character in the program ran by the head coach being evaluated.

Findings and Implications

After participant interviews the researcher draws the following conclusions from this study:

Finding 1: Character deficits in adolescence are being seen across schools:

Implication: An all-school inclusive approach could benefit the character development of students across all schools. Schools could also benefit from working together and networking with other schools having the same issues.

Finding 2: Community Involvement/Leadership training is the best programs currently being used to develop character through high school athletics

Implication: Activities directors could make these program mandatory for their athletics programs to participate in. These programs were present in all athletics programs could help to develop the character traits that have shown deficits compared to past generations.

Finding 3: Character development opportunities are geared primarily toward the already identifies leaders within each program.

Implication: The majority of programs reported to specifically and intentionally raise character traits are being carried out with student-athletes already deemed to be leaders. Making these programs more widespread throughout all demographics of student-athletes could help develop positive character traits in all members of the program, versus just the perceived top student-athletes.

Finding 4: Activities directors do not have specific requirements of head coaches as it pertains to character development within their programs.

Implication: Head coaches are not required to develop character in their student-athletes as part of their job descriptions or yearly review. Having such requirements in place would ensure more student-athletes received intentional character development through their high school athletics programs.

Finding 5: Activities director's desired effects of character education vary in perspectives.

Implication: Various answers were reported on the effects of character education, meaning there is not a clear unified goal. The formation of a unified goal and objectives could lead to a more focused approach to character development from school to school and program to program.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study examined the role of the activities director in character development through high school athletics. The study was supported by research is identifying character deficits in today's youth being a topic that needs to be addressed. Literature specific to the evaluation of the activities director could benefit from additional research.

Additional research is necessary for activities departments across different scopes of school districts. This research should be centered around what is being done to improve their character across all demographics, not just the leaders of each sport. The evaluation process of the Activities Director on how they are guiding character development should also be an emphasis of study. Finally, the impact of such programs on the number of acts showing character deficits and the benefits for future achievement by student-athletes in these programs would make a contribution to the existing areas of literature.

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