MORAL IDENTITY AND MORAL SELF-REGULATION IN COLLEGIATE CONTACT SPORT ATHLETES

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Organized sports have widespread cultural influence, which can be channeled either constructively or destructively (Bredemeier & Shields, 2006). Sport morality research can help us better understand how and why athletes live up to or fall short of behavioral standards, as well as give us ideas on how to encourage more desirable behavior. This study sought to discover whether priming athletes’ moral identities would affect their cognitive and emotional responses to sport situations in accordance with Bandura’s (1991) social cognitive self-regulatory framework. We hypothesized that a moral prime would foster stronger moral judgments, result in greater negative emotional responses to antisocial behavior in sport, and thus motivate a decrease in these behaviors. Likewise, the prime would foster more positive judgments of prosocial behaviors, resulting in stronger positive emotional reactions and a corresponding increase in reported likelihood of prosocial acts. Male (n=20) and female (n=2) collegiate, contact team sport athletes were randomly assigned to either a control or moral identity group and completed a corresponding priming task. Afterwards, data were collected regarding their judgments, affective responses, and likelihood of performing behaviors depicted in a sequence of five sport scenario video clips developed from the Pro- and Antisocial Behavior in Sport Scale (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009). The data support the general fit of an affective self-regulatory system. However, no differences between groups were found on judgments or affective reactions for any scenario, with both groups scoring relatively high on overall morality of responses. Beyond the inadequate sample size, this likely reflects a failure of the priming task; the manipulation check did not indicate the expected differences in moral identity between the two groups. Further work is required to explain the lack of differences between groups as well as whether the self-reported data accurately reflects athlete behavior.

References

