Stakeholder Management in High School Athletics: An Individual Level Analysis

by

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Abstract

The landscape of high school athletics is changing; participation rates have steadily been increasing, the cost of providing these opportunities is rising, and there is a decrease in state and local education funding. Given this changing setting, traditional as well as non-traditional stakeholders are playing new roles in interscholastic athletics and have begun interacting with athletic directors in unique ways. The aim of this study was to understand the process that athletic director's engage in to manage these stakeholder relationships. Stakeholder theory and decision-making literature were used to frame the process of stakeholder management from the perspective of athletic directors. A mixed methods approach was utilized; interviews and a questionnaire provided depth and breadth to our understanding of the process of stakeholder management. Results point toward a process of stakeholder engagement that involves stakeholders within the decision-making process on major decisions such as head coaching hires or policy changes. This study contributes to the literature of stakeholder management and participative decision-making in education. Future directions point toward involving more individual level or organizational-level characteristics that may provide insights into possible ties with a stakeholder engagement model of stakeholder management.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Interscholastic sport, also known as high school sport, is at an interesting crossroads. Participation rates are growing, and participation opportunities are expanding with the introduction of 'new' sports to high school athletic programs such as lacrosse, field hockey, and bowling (NFHSA, 2014). Meanwhile, changes are happening within education policy (Lingarad, Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2013); most notably, budgets have shifted focus to achieve higher standardized test scores (Williamson & Snow, 2014). This study was set in Michigan where the shifting economy has led to school consolidations (Murray, 2010), which adds another change to the educational landscape. All of these changes have led to stakeholders who are more engaged with education in general, and in turn athletic departments. Stakeholders to high school athletics are any group or individual who is affected by or can affect what goes on in the management of high school sport (Freeman, 1984). In turn, high school athletic departments often reflect the norms and institutional trends found in intercollegiate sport (NIAAA, 2013). This study aims to understand how high school athletic directors in the state of Michigan engage in stakeholder management in light of the changing dynamics in interscholastic athletics.

In this chapter, I discuss key areas of the research context, including an overview of high school sport: internal organizational structure, school, and athletic department funding, and how these changes have led toward including stakeholders into the administration of high school sports. Then, I provide highlights of the theoretical framework I used, which offered insights

into the tensions related to balancing multiple relationships while making key organizational decisions. Stakeholder theory and decision-making literature were utilized to help understand how the dynamic relationships surrounding high school athletics impacts stakeholder management. I conclude this chapter by offering some preliminary theoretical and practical contributions of the study.

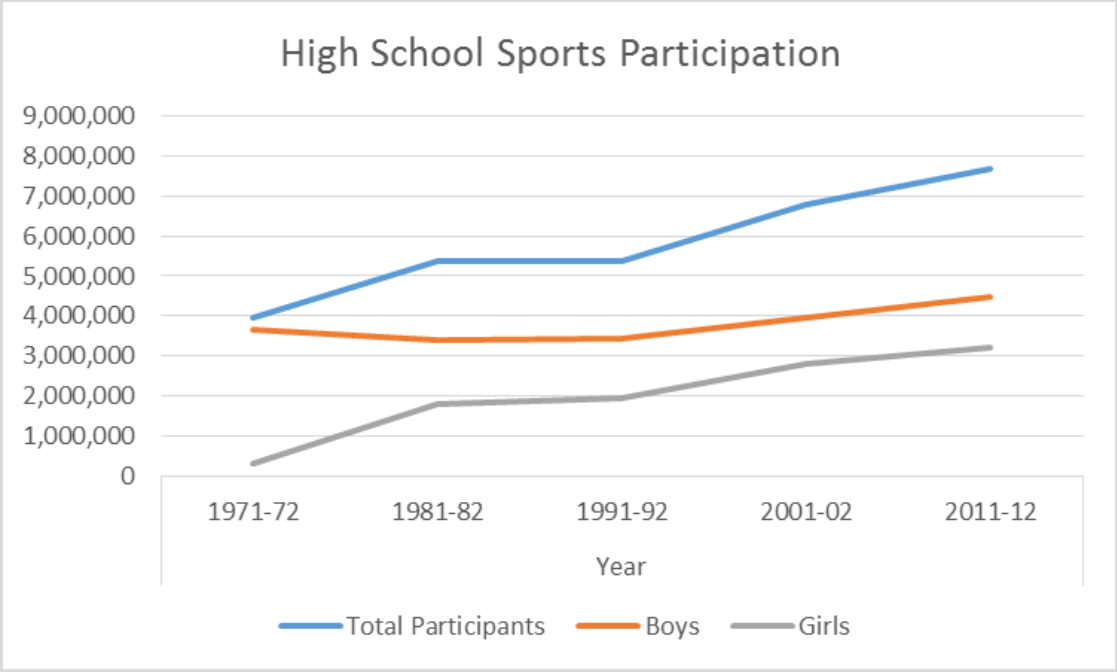
Background of the Problem

High school sport introduction. "High school sports... play an outsized role in the U.S. educational system and have subtly permeated the fabric of our society" (Pruter & Project, 2013, pg. xi.). This excerpt captures the pervasiveness of high school sport in the United States today. Similar to intercollegiate athletics, in the mid 1800's high school sport began as a student driven initiative where students organized themselves and competed. When physical education became part of the educational curriculum in the mid 1800's, schools became more invested in sport, and therefore, more involved with its administration. From the 1920's to the 1930's, an increase in sport participation promoted the need for national governance of high school sport. Today this organization is known as the National Federation of State High Schools Association (Prueter & Project, 2013). The main goal of schools organizing high school sport was institutional control of young men: it was intended to be an outlet to keep boys out of trouble through wholesome, leisure activities (Berryman, 1996; Seefeldt & Ewing, 1997).

Although sport was originally intended for boys, the passage of Title IX in 1972 increased girls' participation rates exponentially. In the first two decades after Title IX was enacted, various amendments were proposed to define and limit the purpose of Title IX. However, most of these amendments failed. In 1990, the Office of Civil Rights published a Title IX investigation manual that included a three-prong test explaining and interpreting the law,

thereby giving stable grounds for legal enforcement, that drove female participation rates higher throughout the 1990's and early 2000's. Today virtually every high school and many middle schools in the United States provide some level of organized interscholastic athletic programs to boys and girls as an enhancement to students' academic pursuits (NFSHA, 2014). With so many schools offering sport opportunities, students' participation in high school sport totals nearly eight million (see Figure 1; NFSHA, 2014). This makes interscholastic sport the largest sports program in the United States. (For comparison, there are only 482,533 student-athletes competing at the NCAA level, [Irik, 2015].)

Figure 1



***Information from NFHSA Participation Rates Data (NFHSA, 2014)

Sport opportunities are not the same across different types of schools. Socioeconomic status has been shown to be a determining factor in participation rates among students (Johnston, Delva, & O'Malley, 2007). Students at high socioeconomic status schools choose to participate

more often and at higher rates in organized sports their schools provide relative to those from lower socioeconomic schools (Santos, Esculcas, & Mota, 2004). In particular, participation rates and opportunities for girls seem to be thwarted by economic disadvantages and school resources; one in four girls at urban schools have never participated in organized team sports, whereas one in six boys do (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). These findings highlight the differences that can be found among participation rates at different urbanicity and socioeconomic schools.

With the overall growth of participation in U.S. high schools, the type and nature of sport opportunities are also changing. The media coverage of concussions and deaths in football has led to interests in safer, less head-to-head contact sports such as volleyball and soccer. High school students are diversifying their interests in sport opportunities by participating in 'newer' sports such as lacrosse and field hockey. Bowling and archery have also seen an increase in number of teams, drawing a different type of student into interscholastic sport (NFHSA, 2014). Other changes are seen in the rise of cross-country and crew teams that have become more prominent in interscholastic sports (NIAAA, 2013) as these teams boast large participation numbers for boys and girls.

Schools offer a wide variety of justifications for the expense of athletic departments. Individual participant benefits include behavioral, physical, and academic improvements (Farb & Matjasko, 2012; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Holland & Andre, 1987). For example, sport has been shown to improve physical and emotional health as well as academic achievement and quality of life for students (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Organizational and institutional advantages to supporting athletics include enhanced image and decreased violence in the school and community. Schools with a higher proportion of sport participants also find that students identify more with the school and its values (Marsh & Kleitman, 2003), as well as report

significantly fewer crimes and suspensions on school grounds (Veliz & Shakib, 2012). Therefore, for these reasons and many more, sport is often seen as complementary means to achieve educational goals and values (Marsh & Kleitman, 2003), by building on traditional classroom education. Interscholastic sport provides a positive value, culture, and tradition for schools (Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Veliz, & Shakib 2012). While there are many positive benefits to the inclusion of sport in high schools, not all schools are able to justify the expense for the benefit of both the students and schools.

Empirical research reveals many beneficial outcomes related to participation in high school athletics; even so, some arguments call for cutting sports from high schools. Although the intent of sport is healthy, there are various unhealthy, detrimental outcomes. Research has found that involvement in sports leads to higher levels of alcohol and substance use in athletes (Diehl, Thiel, Zipfel, Mayer, Litaker, & Schneider, 2012; Kwan, Bobko, Faulkner, Donnelly, & Cairney, 2014; Lisha & Sussman, 2010; Mays, Gatti, & Thompson, 2011), especially among students involved in contact sports versus those involved in noncontact sports (Veliz, Boyd, & McCabe, 2015). Issues of sport safety have also been at the forefront of the media; in particular, there has been a focus on the high rates of concussion injuries in high school athletes (Green, 2015; Lincoln, Casswell, Almquist, Dunn, Norris, & Hinton, 2011). The rise in attention to concussions, and athlete safety in general, has led to equipment and rule changes that are costly to families and schools that have to keep up with new regulations (Kelley, 2012). In addition to the instances of physical injuries, high school athletes have been found to burn out mentally due to the high socialization pressures and importance that is placed on sport participation (Brenner, 2007; Coakley, 1992). For these reasons, several critics have argued for the separation of

competitive sport from the educational curriculum of U.S. high schools (Coakley, 2015; Coleman, 1961, 1966; Coleman, & Johnstone, 1961).

From the start, interscholastic sport in the United States has been accessible at little to no cost to the athletes. Due in part to the Great Recession of 2007-2008, educational financial constraints have forced changes and adaptations on the provision of high school athletics. Athletics are administratively perceived as 'non-essential' or 'non-core' to student education due to their absence from standardized testing; without being a part of the standardized testing process, athletics are less of a priority for school district budgets compared to tested areas such as math and science. Because of this performance-based budgeting trend (Williamson & Snow, 2014), administrators of interscholastic athletics are experiencing fiscal tensions and constraints, which have led to unprecedented choices and tradeoffs on the delivery of sport opportunities for students (NIAAA, 2013). As a result, in order to maintain a consistent level in the provision of athletics, athletic directors have begun to engage stakeholders in various capacities to bridge and build relationships and to increase access to various resources (Jeynes, 2007; McNeal, 2001; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004). Stakeholders have been called on when athletic directors have implemented creative ways to fund sports through participation fees, commercialization of athletic facilities, or utilization of school-supporting nonprofits, such as booster clubs that support athletics (NIAAA, 2013). Another increasingly common practice is to have school sports that are not financially supported by the school, sometimes referred to as 'club' sports (Bomey, 2011; Loh, 2011). Necessary funds-- from the coaches' salaries to travel and tournament entry fees-- are solely supported through participation fees or fundraising by participants and their families. These sports are still under the regulation of the school, except they are financially independent. These new strategies, such as asking stakeholders to

financially support and volunteer in sport programs, are leading to a new emphasis on relationships and the management of these stakeholder relationships within athletic departments in order to provide opportunities for the students.

School organizational structure. Athletic directors are nested within multiple layers of a school's organizational structure. Many school structures are similar, although school district size may vary the structure. For example, larger school districts may have more internal central administration positions to coordinate the efforts of each school (Rowan, 1990). Most high schools are led by a building principal, the individual to whom the athletic director typically reports. Principals in turn report to a superintendent who has been hired by the school board to be what corporate organizations might label as the chief executive officer (Rowan, Raudenbush, & Kang, 1991). School board members are made up of locally elected officials who represent the community and are charged with formulating the high level policy and function of the school (Crum, 2007). Therefore, athletic directors would be considered a middle-level manager in most organizational structures because they oversee coaches and students-athletes while also being managed by various higher levels of administration.

School district funding. Most states fund public schools through local property taxes. However, the state of Michigan passed Proposal A in 1994 to reduce the dependence on local property taxes and shift the funding of public schools to sales and other use taxes (Brouillette, 2001). The key objective of Proposal A was to decrease the funding disparities between school districts by adopting a minimum 'foundation' grant of $5,000 per pupil (Brouillette, 2001), which increased to just over $7,000 for the 2013-2014 school year (Michigan Department of Education, 2013). The leveling of funding disparities between school

districts provides more equitable educational opportunities across the state for all children regardless of the economic status of their community (Andonizio, 2000; Brouillette, 2001).

What was not predicted for Proposal A was how much the state's economy would fluctuate, and therefore, affect the provision of these funds and would cause them to waver. The Great Recession of 2008 impacted the already struggling state of Michigan harder than most states, which further limited funding for public schools due to their dependence on state level taxes (Danzinger, Seefeldt, & Burgard, 2015; Pratt-Dawsey, 2014). These financially constraining factors have led to policy changes in schools, including cutting instructional time and curriculum, decreasing professional development for school staff, and consolidating schools and their resources (Freelon, Bertrand, & Rogers, 2012; Picus & Odden, 2011). One solution taken up by administrators was to look toward non-traditional sources of revenue to make up for budgetary shortfalls. This practice, in turn, has broadened the involvement of stakeholders in many capacities to be described in the following sections.

Non-traditional revenue in schools. The uncertainty and instability in school finance has led to creative new approaches and strategies to maintain funding in public schools. Many of these approaches involve building relationships with new organizations and individuals who can provide resources. Non-traditional revenue generating strategies include practices such as user fees, developer fees, partnerships with private businesses, and boosters (school supporting non-profits)(Addonizio, 1998). Other tactics involve selling advertisements on school premises (Brent & Lunden, 2009), leasing cell phone towers on school grounds (Haung, 2015), and developing revenue-generating school programs (LaFlure, 2011). All these alternative funding tactics were rare in schools ten years ago and have resulted in new pressures on school

administrators to develop and manage relationships with stakeholders who provide critical resources.

Particularly noteworthy among the non-traditional revenue sources are the school supporting nonprofits. These organizations file under the 501(c)(3) U.S. tax status and consider themselves 'education support organizations' (Nelson & Gazley, 2014). They typically raise funds via membership dues, earned income, philanthropic gifts, and fundraisers. Specifically, the number of booster clubs, which primarily target supporting athletics, increased 308% nationally, from 431 organizations in 1995 to 1,761 organizations in 2010 (Nelson & Gazley, 2014). Within the same time frame, booster club revenue jumped from $31,078,895 to $148,900,391 nationally (Nelson & Gazley, 2014), which is approximately a 379% increase. Booster clubs vary in size and structure within each school, although some schools do not have the parental and community support to sustain a booster organization. Booster clubs for athletics can be found at both the individual program level of each sport and school wide. The booster club's purpose is to serve the athletic department, and athletic directors tend to utilize the booster club for their fundraising abilities and resources.

Athletic department funding. With increasingly constrained financial resources, school districts must prioritize which programs and departments get financial and other resources. Most allocation of resource decisions are made at the school district level, and decisions are made most frequently based on student achievement on state assessments. Teacher salaries and benefits are prioritized to keep class sizes small and to increase academic achievement (Goertz & Duffy, 1999). Therefore, since athletics is considered a 'nonessential' program due to its tangential relationship with academics and performance on standardized tests based on the

Common Core Standards set forth by many states (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011), it does not receive as much financial support as for example math and science.

Athletic department budgets are not created equal. Some budgets do not include coaching salaries, which are the biggest expense to an athletic department. Other budgets do not include the cost of travel for events, which may come out of a different section of the school budget. Lastly, the maintenance of the athletic facilities may be distributed in various ways depending on how the facility or field is used in the school as well as in the community. Therefore, there is no way to directly compare athletic department budgets across schools. However, Stevenson (2007) reports that while participation rates, opportunities, and expenses have increased substantially over the last forty years, athletic budgets have not grown proportionately. Increasing participation rates inflate the costs of athletics and when paired with decreases in school district budget allocations to athletics, athletic directors struggle to fund the growing interest. In particular, athletic departments at schools deal with different types of budgetary constraints; high poverty schools struggle with small budgets to cover the few sports they do offer whereas low poverty schools tend to have more sport offerings, and therefore their budget must stretch over the increased number of sport programs the school runs.

Budgetary challenges vary across schools. With pressures to direct school resources toward academic achievement, athletic departments are feeling the pressure to do more with less, and this can create disparities in participation opportunities between schools of higher or lower socioeconomic statuses (Johnston, Delva, & O'Malley, 2007). In particular, some athletic directors have chosen to cut transportation to and from events, or to cut costs allocated for facilities, equipment, or personnel (Johnston et al., 2007; Sallis, Conway, Prochaska, McKenzie, Marshall, & Brown, 2001). These shortfalls often are picked up by parents, but this is not

always possible in lower socioeconomic schools, leaving students with less resources and opportunities (Beets, Vogel, Forlaw, Pitetti, & Cardinal, 2006). Therefore, athletic directors of lower socioeconomic status schools face different challenges regarding resources and the provision of sport opportunities for student-athletes.

Athletic department engaging stakeholders. With the variability and lack of proportionate growth of budgetary increases to participation rates, athletic directors are turning toward other stakeholders to bridge the gap between their needs and school funding. Athletic directors have begun to implement alternative resource strategies for sustainability; alternative resources to athletic departments can come in many forms from direct monetary donations and volunteer support to sponsorship partnerships with local businesses and in kind donations of uniforms or equipment. All these contributions are important to the bottom line of an athletic director's budget, and each engages a different stakeholder group. For example, a trend that has seen growth is the implementation of participation fees, or pay-to-play fees. Participation fees are found at sixty percent of middle and high schools nationally (Clark, Singer, Butchart, Kauffman, & Davis, 2012), and reported fees range from twenty dollars to over five hundred dollars per sport (NIAAA, 2013). In this case, athletic directors are looking to parents for budgetary support, changing this stakeholder group's relationship to the athletic department.

Another direction athletic departments use to increase resources is an enterprise activity such as commercialization (Brent & Lundon, 2009), meaning athletic departments sell signage or marketing space to local businesses in sport arenas, programs, or half-time entertainment. This engages another community stakeholder by asking for local businesses to support athletics. Athletic departments have even gone as far as selling personal seat licenses to finance the construction of athletic facilities (Seewer, 2005), a tactic typically saved for college and

professional athletics. Capitalizing on the booster club and its relationship with the community is another strategy athletic directors are using to find resources and, in turn, engage more stakeholders (NIAAA, 2013). The booster club has been essential to athletic department budgets, often helping to purchase 'big ticket' items from high jump mats to new facilities. Lastly, local education foundations are now being seen as a viable, consistent source of funding in school districts (NIAAA, 2013) because they are providing resources to elements of school budgets that have been cut, which may help athletics.

All of the stakeholder relationships providing resources have interests and goals that motivate their support, and athletic directors must manage them when making decisions.

Statement of the Problem

Interscholastic athletic programs frequently utilize external resources, which engenders relationships with various stakeholders, such as community businesses, parents, and booster organizations. Stakeholders, in turn, carry their interests and goals into the decision-making process within athletic departments. In order to maintain these relationships, athletic directors must manage stakeholders by keeping as many of them satisfied as possible with decisions made within the athletic department. However, we know little about how athletic directors engage in the process of stakeholder management. What considerations do athletic directors take into account when managing stakeholders, how do they balance numerous interests and goals within the process of managing stakeholders? Therefore, the management of stakeholders has the potential to influence the athletic director's management of the department's success from maintaining internal support for athletics to cultivating external resources and support. Thus, the management of stakeholders is seen as a key tool in organizational success.

There is a theoretical gap in our understanding of the individual level perspective on how managers engage in the process of stakeholder management. My study seeks to address this gap by looking at one organizational level position, athletic directors, across many organizations, school districts, to build an understanding of the process of stakeholder management. This is important to our understanding of stakeholder management as these individual level influences and decisions may have an impact on organizational level decisions and strategies.

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to understand the process that athletic directors utilize to manage stakeholder relationships. In particular, this study examined how athletic directors in the state of Michigan manage relationships with stakeholders, specifically with respect to their decision-making processes. The significance of relationships between the athletic director and stakeholders informed our understanding of the process engaged in when managing stakeholders for the benefit of the student-athletes and the athletic department. This study employed interviews as well as questionnaires to capture the breadth of the process athletic directors utilize regarding the management of stakeholders.

Besides the theoretical contribution to the individual level of analysis of stakeholder management, this study established a foundation surrounding the management of interscholastic sport. Much of what is understood is from the perspective of practitioners and their subjective opinions on best practices. Therefore, this study begins to establish an empirical foundation on the utilization of stakeholders and the management of those relationships in high school athletics.

To investigate this topic, this study will address the following research questions:

RQ1: Who are stakeholders to high school athletics and what are the characteristics of those stakeholder relationships?

RQ2: What are the decisions that high school athletic directors make?

RQ3: What is the process through which athletic directors engage in stakeholder management?

Theoretical Underpinning

Due to the thick web of relationships that permeate high school athletics, a stakeholder theory lens was utilized to understand the mechanisms and processes involved. Stakeholder theory accounts for the relationships between the stakeholder and the organization and characteristics of the relationships involved. Athletic directors must account for many types of relationships; some are external to the school and some internal. Schools have institutional expectations and requirements from the federal, state, and local governments. Interscholastic athletics adds another layer to this complexity, as athletic departments have similar layers of athletic governance to respond to with national, state, and local (conference) organizations setting expectations and rules to follow. External stakeholders to athletic departments could be booster clubs, local educational foundations, parents, community members, and local businesses. Internal stakeholders to interscholastic sports include student-athletes, coaches, school district administrators such as school boards, superintendents, and principals. Each of these stakeholder groups has interests and priorities to which athletic directors must attend. With these various influential relationships involved in an athletic director's role, stakeholder theory and decision-making literature on stakeholders was reviewed briefly in this chapter and is explained with more detail in Chapter II.

Stakeholder theory. Stakeholder theory offers a perspective that integrates, accounts for, and explains the varying, and often competing, interests and expectations of a variety of individuals and groups (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & deColle, 2010; Laplume, Sonpar, & Litz, 2008). It developed out of a strategic approach that calls for organizations to be

cognizant of stakeholders in order to achieve strong organizational performance. Freeman (1984) believed that organizations should be managed in the interest of all their constituents, not just those who have a share in the organization. Understanding the interests and behaviors of stakeholders can play an instrumental role in the performance of the organization. Stakeholders can be considered by management to be *primary* such as communities, customers, employees, and suppliers, or *secondary*, such as competitors, special interest groups, government, and media (Freeman, Harrison, & Wicks, 2007), with the difference between the two groups being the direct contact and impact they have on the organization.

At the core of stakeholder management is the executive's job to manage and shape these relationships to create as much value as possible for both the organization and the stakeholders. Tradeoffs happen in the decision-making of stakeholder management, and it is the executive's job to improve the tradeoff for all sides (Freeman et al., 2007). Two relationship characteristics that help guide the management of stakeholders are prioritization and salience. Prioritization refers to the designation by managers of which stakeholders are most important within decisions and which ones are secondary (Freeman et al., 2007). Classifying stakeholders through their salience aims to prioritize competing stakeholder claims based on the power, legitimacy, and urgency of their relationship (Mitchell, Agle, & Woods, 1997). The characteristics of the stakeholder relationship can impact how the manager makes decisions regarding the management of stakeholders.

Stakeholder decision-making. Research exists about the influence that social relations can have on decision-making (Murillo-Luna, Garces-Ayerbe, & Rivera-Torres, 2008; Pfeffer, Salancik, & Leblebici, 1976; Trevino 1986). The management of stakeholder relationships can impact various levels of the athletic department from resource acquisition, to the participation of

student-athletes and the opportunities athletic directors can provide. Athletic directors make multiple decisions regarding the management of stakeholders. This process can be difficult to do because of the dynamic needs of multiple stakeholders. External factors, such as financial changes in the economy or legal changes to policies and enforcement of those policies, can influence internal organizational decision-making (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974). An internal factor, such as the highly bureaucratic organizational structures found in schools (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), can also impact the decision processes of athletic departments by creating layers of approval necessary in order to make various changes. Therefore, both internal and external stakeholder groups and internal and external factors can influence decisions made by athletic directors.

Reviewing the literature on decision-making surrounding the management of stakeholders, Reynolds, Shultz, and Hekman (2006) focused on two types of decision-making schemes. The first scheme they described was the within-decision approach, which focuses on each decision being a separate occurrence, and stakeholder interests are considered separately for each decision. The second scheme was the across-decision approach where managers focus on balancing stakeholders' interests across multiple decisions. The difference in these two approaches comes from the carry-over of consideration of stakeholders from one decision to the next; within-decision approach does not carry over stakeholder consideration from decision to decision, while across decision does. Although these initial decision approaches are important, there may be other factors involved in the process of stakeholder management for athletic directors. Viewing the process from conceptualization of the stakeholder relationships to the decisions made regarding stakeholders will help to unpack the processes that athletic directors utilize when managing stakeholders.

There are many elements that go into decision-making processes. A more detailed analysis of stakeholder theory and decision-making surrounding stakeholder management are described in Chapter II.

Importance of the Study

This study contributes to our theoretical understanding of the process surrounding stakeholder management through the perspective of a manager. Using an individual level analysis broadens our understanding of the process of stakeholder management through investigation of approaches engaged in by various athletic directors. Also, applying stakeholder theory to the secondary educational setting is a novel approach for that field. Because the educational setting contains stakeholders different from corporate organizations, their values and norms help expand our understanding of how managers engage in stakeholder management. Theoretically, contributions can be made in understanding the different relationship characteristics involved within the setting of secondary education, which may be different from our understanding of corporate, large-scale stakeholder management. Also, understanding more about the process of stakeholder management and how the engagement of stakeholders as a management strategy was examined.

Besides the theoretical contribution, this study adds to our knowledge of the administration of interscholastic athletics, in particular how strategic decisions are made by managing stakeholders. This study captures the varying interests and concerns that athletic directors manage when making decisions. It also highlights the importance of athletics for students in schools and how their athletic experience is perceived as essential for varying reasons. Therefore, we understand the internal and external dynamics of how athletics fit into

school districts, and in turn, begin policies and strategies that incorporate and encourage stakeholder engagement throughout school processes.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature and Theoretical Framing

The aim of this study was to understand the process that athletic directors engage in when managing stakeholder relationships. In order to understand this phenomenon, stakeholder theory and decision-making literature were reviewed. Besides examining the theoretical literature, this chapter begins by detailing a more thorough landscape of interscholastic sport and the challenges facing educational administrators.

Context

Education administration. There are many layers to educational policy and administration; this section serves as an introduction to the intricacies of education administration. State governments have been designated to provide primary and secondary education in the United States (*Robinson v. Cahill*, 1973). State governments then established school districts to organize and deliver education locally (Freeman, 1979). Consequently, school districts, as public agencies, are legally responsible for the educational process and have to guarantee educational availability (Freeman, 1979). Therefore, many decisions around the delivery and policies involved in education are in the hands of local administrators.

With legislative mandate being an undertone, educators debate how to implement the required public schooling. Key debates center around questions such as: What are the desired outcomes? What methods should be used to obtain the outcomes? How do you evaluate them? How do you pay for them (Chaikind & Fowler, 2001)? Every school seeks high

educational performance, one problem with this lies in the financial constraints for achieving this goal. A trend that is influencing educational policy is performance-based budgeting, where rewards and resources are contingent on standardized test performance. For example, in 2012 Michigan Governor Rick Snyder tied part of his budget to schools that performed well on standardized tests (Feldscher, 2012). Despite the importance of a well-rounded education, performance-based budgeting can have an influence on 'non-essential' or 'non-core' educational experiences, such as physical education, music, art, and athletics. Due to their absence in the standardized testing system, these programs are not as highly valued by administrators and may be cut from the curriculum or may be reduced in the amount of time each student spends on these subjects and experiences.

Interscholastic sport structure. In the United States, athletic departments of individual schools organize competitions with teams from other schools. Most competitions involve schools that belong to the same athletic conference, which include a grouping of schools based on orientation (public/private/charter), size (enrollment), and geography (proximity to one another). Conferences have sport tournaments and championship games each season. Schools also belong to a larger sport governing organization, typically referred to as a state association (i.e. MHSAA, Michigan High School Athletic Association) that exist to develop common rules for eligibility and competition for interscholastic athletics. State organizations establish divisions that schools belong to based on enrollment; these divisions serve as an organizing tool for statewide competitions.

Within school structures, the placement of athletic departments varies from school to school. School district administration hires athletic directors, who in turn typically report to high school principals or school district superintendents depending on the school's structure. In some

settings where school districts have multiple high schools and multiple athletic directors, there may be a person in the central office to whom they also report to other than their principal. Athletic directors manage the athletic department, which includes responsibilities such as hiring coaches, budgeting, game day management, insurance, and managing athletes (NIAAA, 2013). Besides their function as athletic directors, they usually have other school-based responsibilities like teaching, administration, or other roles depending on the structure and size of the school.

Interscholastic sport delivery challenges. There is pressure on athletic directors to adapt to changing student interests, safety regulations, and budgets. School budgetary constraints for non-core programming place tremendous pressure on athletic directors to do more with less as rising costs plague athletic departments. One of the most pressing issues comes from the rising demand in participation opportunities and the diversity of these opportunities with newer sports like bowling and crew being added to many district's departments. On top of increasing costs from adding opportunities, the cost of participation has increased various other associated costs. For example, there is an increase in insurance costs to schools as more sport participants means more students to cover with insurance. Rapidly changing technology in sports equipment, facilities, and playing surfaces are causing modifications to safety rules and regulations; therefore, increasing costs to purchase the new equipment and the renovation of facilities to meet the higher safety standards (Kelley, 2012). These are some of the key hurdles that athletic directors face in their job to provide athletic opportunities, with each of these hurdles comes a stakeholder to attend to and satisfy.

These challenges are not necessarily unique to interscholastic sport, but can also be seen at the collegiate level. College athletics balances organizational effectiveness indicators such as

on-the-field performance, education, ethics, image, and resources (Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Wolfe, Hoeber, & Babiak, 2002). Besides effectiveness measures, intercollegiate athletics faces great pressure to be economically self-sufficient due to challenging economic times for universities (Padilla & Baumer, 1994). This pressure for financial independence leads to a more commercialized and professionalized version of collegiate athletics, which trickles down to interscholastic sport and can be seen in various ways from the push for sport specialization to the professionalized delivery of sports. Even so, the biggest difference between intercollegiate and interscholastic sport is the budget; intercollegiate sport budgets are growing (Orleans, 2013; Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Shughart, 2010), while interscholastic budgets seem to be shrinking (NIAAA, 2013).

Budgeting in schools. In any organization the allocation of resources is a politically driven process (Lasswell, 1936; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Through budgeting, organizations express their norms and infuse the process with power and self-interest (Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1988). For example, budgeting is one way power in relationships can be expressed in school districts because of the politics involved with who gets what, when, and how becomes transparent through the allocation process. Because the Great Recession has changed how schools are handling decreasing budgets, self-interest, power, and politics play a heightened role in this process (Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1988). In the end, budgeting can demonstrate conformity toward a school district's rules and priorities. Specifically the value that is placed on interscholastic athletics in order to maintain the community's support, the budgeting process reflects the norms and expectations of the community (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1987).

Fluctuating enrollments and dynamic internal constraints also make balancing school district budgets complicated, which in turn challenges the budget allocated to athletic

departments. The uncertainty about the future budgetary allotments and information about their alternatives (Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck, & Pennings, 1971; McKinley, Zhao, & Rust, 2000) forces administration to minimize the unpredictability and dependence on those resources in order to maximize their autonomy. This can be done by looking for substitutable resources such as participation fees and commercialization (Davis & Cobb, 2010). Substitutability is a strategy for athletic directors to obtain alternative resources (Hickson et al., 1971) to school district funding and, in turn, diversify their income leading to more autonomy. In order to gain all the resources and support that athletic directors need to function, they are utilizing more stakeholders to make up for shortfalls in school district budgets. Involving more stakeholders could provide athletic directors access to a multitude of resources, but in turn athletic directors have to manage these stakeholder relationships.

The changing dynamics in district level budgeting has shifted strategies and opportunities that are available for athletic directors to maintain and grow the provision of interscholastic sport. This is where athletic directors are being more creative; they search for external opportunities to gain funds, for example by utilizing booster clubs, commercialization, and participation fees (NIAAA, 2013). With each creative solution there is an engagement with a stakeholder group along with their expectations and goals motivating their involvement. Even so, all of these opportunities are regulated by school district policies.

Theoretical Background

Athletic departments are situated in schools, as well as in districts, within communities, and this nested organizational structure contributes to the web of relationships that have a stake in the management of athletics. The internal organizational influence structures come from superintendents, principals, and school board administrators. Athletic departments also manage

relationships with the community, parents, boosters, local businesses, and conference and state governance structures creating a layer of external organizational influence structures. These various internal and external stakeholders contain their own interests and expectations that the athletic director must manage; applying stakeholder theory helps untangle the impact that these relationships have on athletic director's decision-making surrounding the management of these stakeholder groups.

The section of the chapter focuses on stakeholder theory as a means to understand the diverse interests and relationships that athletic directors balance when making decisions. First an introduction and definition of stakeholder theory terms are presented. Then, the perspective of how the manager plays a central role in understanding stakeholder management is discussed; managers may use various classification techniques to manage stakeholder relationships and they are explained. Next, the application of stakeholder theory to different industries was examined, followed by a review of decision-making literature surrounding stakeholder management.

Stakeholder Theory

Introduction. Stakeholder theory is considered a 'framework' rather than a theory due to its lack of testable propositions (Freeman et al., 2010). A diverse literature acknowledges and applies stakeholder theory, including economics, strategic management, finance, and marketing. Stakeholder theory originated in strategic management literature as a method to examine how outside factors influence organizational performance.

Freeman's (1984) work was essential in formulating stakeholder theory as it is presently understood. His pragmatic approach to strategy utilized stakeholders as an avenue for better firm performance. Organizations used to focus only on satisfying the interests of shareholders, individuals or groups who have a financial stake in the organization, to more broadly satisfying

the interests of their stakeholders. Stakeholders are those who are affected by or can affect an organization's operations or interests (Freeman, 1984). This is because a broad range of stakeholders' interests can play an instrumental role in enhancing organizational performance. This stakeholder perspective moved strategic literature from a reactive policy approach of strategy formulation to one where active 'environmental scanning' increased proactive planning (Freeman et al., 2010).

Because stakeholder relationships generate the activities and purpose of the business, they are one way to understand an organization (Freeman, 1984; Jones, 1995; Walsh, 2005). When viewing the concept of stakeholders in the educational setting, including a moral twist on the definition is important to capture the differing nature of those relationships that lack the driving economic focus of typical corporate organizations. Evan and Freeman (1988) define stakeholders this way, as those who "benefit from or are harmed by, and whose rights are violated or respected by corporate actions" (pg. 79). The United States defines public school as a human right, and thus the Evan and Freeman definition is applicable to the educational setting and was used in this study to identify stakeholders. Although there are other definitions and viewpoints regarding the definition of a stakeholder (see Mitchell et al., 1997 for a chronological review), the definitions presented here served as an adequate guide for this study.

After defining who is a stakeholder, there needs to be a definition of what is their "stake." "Stake" has been defined as an investment of money, time, or other resources, and it offers a return on the investment (Clarkson, 1995; Etzioni, 1998; Mitchell et al., 1997). The key factor with these relationships is a 'return on the investment' where both the organization and the stakeholder benefit from the relationship (Donaldson & Preston, 1995); this mutually beneficial aspect of the relationship regards both parties as important. For example, parents involved with

athletics do so for the enhancement of their child's educational and sport experience, and for the building of social capital (Guest & Schneider, 2003). An important stake in athletics is not always financial capital, but also the volunteer work and time of the community and parents, which has become more essential for a fully functioning athletic department.

Concepts such as "stakeholder" and "stake" are imperative to understand the relationship that internal and external stakeholders, such as parents, community, school board, administration, athletic boosters, and coaches have with interscholastic athletics. Athletic directors can have multiple reasons for managing stakeholders. These reasons might include for example, political support and access to information as well as more open communication and access to new or varied resources. Resources are strained within school districts and stakeholder relationships could be a key to preserving interscholastic athletics, which in turn means athletic directors are motivated to manage stakeholder relationships.

Managing Stakeholders. Managers are the lynchpin to understanding the stakeholder relationships within and around the organization. They have to balance multiple stakeholder groups and all the facets of those relationships, all while doing so within the confines of organizational structures. Managers, in this case athletic directors, are responsible for understanding the various characteristics of relationships that stakeholders bring to the school, and in turn making decisions regarding which stakeholder to attend to and in what capacity. The "management of stakeholders" means that stakeholders' interests and priorities are adequately attended to within the organization, according to the perception of the manager or the organization (Freeman et al., 2010). It is important to understand various factors that can influence an athletic director's decision-making surrounding the management of stakeholders.

Managing stakeholders can be done in various ways depending on organizational level factors such as values and goals. Strategically, managers act proactively to balance stakeholders' interests through making decisions according to stakeholders' claims (Hill & Jones, 1992). Managers look to maximize their long-run value by making tradeoffs among stakeholder groups (Jensen, 2002); the key in these tradeoffs is to improve the perception of the tradeoff being made for all sides (Freeman et al., 2007). Managers employ balancing acts when recognizing stakeholders, responding to them, and building relationships with them. Managers are the central figure to stakeholder theory as they decide how to balance stakeholder interests and the implications of this balance. Having one manager, or a select few managers, making decisions regarding stakeholders means that decisions are based on perceptions rather than an objective reality (Murillo-Luna et al., 2008). Managers utilize stakeholder classification tactics such as attributing salience and prioritization to help handle the dynamic relationships. Categorizing stakeholders based on these classifications may be one tactic that helps athletic directors understand stakeholders' interests and help predict their behaviors (Freeman, 1984). This study explored ways that athletic directors conceptualize stakeholder characteristics, in particular what heuristics they have utilized and how that may influence the process of decision-making surrounding stakeholder management.

Managers must attend to stakeholder groups with heterogeneous priorities simultaneously while within group priorities may change. Stakeholder groups in college athletics have been shown to not always share the same views on issues (Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Trail & Chelladurai, 2000). At the intercollegiate level, it has been found that administrators varied in their responses to goals (Jehlicka, 1997). In particular, athletic directors have various goals for athletics (Chelladurai & Danylchuk, 1984). Although past research has found clustered goals for athletic

stakeholders pertain to winning, ethics, education, and revenue, those goals were not homogeneous within stakeholder groups (Putler & Wolfe, 1999). Therefore, athletic directors cannot assume homogeneous goals and priorities for stakeholder groups, which makes the management of these relationships that much more dynamic and complicated.

Classifications of stakeholders. In order to make better decisions regarding the management of stakeholders, athletic directors may use tactics to classify and label stakeholders based on various relationship characteristics. Two frequently applied classification tactics when understanding stakeholder relationships are: stakeholder salience (Mitchell et al., 1997) and prioritization (Freeman et al., 2007). These tactics help reveal to the organization what is important about that stakeholder and why. Despite using these classifications, managing relationships can be difficult due to the dynamic nature of stakeholder claims, goals, and behaviors. These characteristics are described with more detail.

Salience. One leading way that stakeholders are often classified is through their salience, a term defined by Mitchell and colleagues (1997) as the order and degree of priority given to competing stakeholder claims. Saliency is based on three relationship characteristics: power, urgency, and legitimacy. In Mitchell and colleagues' article (1997), power is based on the possession of valuable resources. Legitimacy refers to the degree that a stakeholder and their claims are socially expected and accepted. The key to legitimacy is that it is more than just a self-perception of a social good; it is a shared perception of what is deemed socially expected and acceptable in behaviors and structures. The last classification set out by Mitchell et al. (1997) was urgency. The concept of urgency moves the static nature of the other two salience classifications into a dynamic nature due to time-sensitivity and the critical claims of urgency. These characteristics show how "power and legitimacy interact and, when combined

with urgency, create different types of stakeholders with different expected behavior patterns," (Mitchell et al., 1997, pg. 863). These three attributes of stakeholders are dynamic and based on perceptions and not objective attributes.

Relationship attributes can be applied to identify stakeholders and their claims, motivation, and importance. Differing combinations of these attributes can be used to classify stakeholders; for instance, a stakeholder with high-perceived power, legitimacy, and urgency is seen as a dominant stakeholder (Mitchell et al., 1997), whereas a stakeholder whose only angle of salience is urgency can be referred to as a demanding stakeholder. When testing these attributes empirically, Parent and Deephouse (2007) found that power had the biggest effect on salience, which was followed by urgency and then legitimacy. Besides the three main attributes of stakeholders, Driscoll and Starik (2004) argued that proximity, an attribute that would consider spatial and temporal variables in stakeholder characteristics, should be included as an attribute to give the natural environment stake in the firm. Even so, proximity has not been widely accepted as a fourth attribute. Salience attributes have been shown to be one stakeholder management technique applied by managers to sort through stakeholders' interests and claims.

Prioritization. Managers attempt to handle stakeholders based on their relationship attributes which allows managers to prioritize stakeholders. Prioritization of stakeholders is said to be the first step in managing stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2007). Despite the lack of consensus on a single frame, empirical research shows managers prioritizing and grouping stakeholders in various ways. I provide three examples of how stakeholders have been prioritized and in turn how prioritization has evolved (Buysse & Verbeke, 2003; Freeman et al., 2007; Henriques & Sadorsky, 1999). In the environmental industry, Henriques and Sadorsky (1999) categorized four stakeholder groups in their study according to managers: regulatory

stakeholders, organizational stakeholders, community stakeholders, and the media. Specifically, regulatory stakeholders are the government and trade associations; organizational stakeholders are customers, suppliers, employees, and shareholders; community stakeholders are the community, environmental organizations, and special interest groups; media includes mass communication which has influence by how it decides to convey the company. Prioritization amongst managers in this study was based on how proactive they were within their level of commitment to the environment.

Buysse and Verbeke (2003) had an alternative view and categorized stakeholders as regulatory stakeholders, external primary stakeholders, internal primary stakeholders, and secondary stakeholders. They too were looking at stakeholders within the lens of an environmental organization. Similar to Henriques and Sadorsky (1999), regulatory stakeholders were the government and governing bodies; whereas, Buysse and Verbeke broke down organizational stakeholders into external primary and internal primary. Internal primary stakeholders being employees and shareholders; external primary stakeholders encompass customers and suppliers. Secondary stakeholders include the community, rivals, and the press, where those classifications were previously in separate categories according to Henriques and Sadorsky (1999). Both the perspectives of Henriques and Sadorsky (1999) and Buysse and Verbeke (2003) breakdown stakeholder groups similarly by encompassing internal and external stakeholders in various capacities while prioritizing internal primary stakeholders.

One approach to stakeholder prioritization that seems to capture both previously defined approaches with a more applicable lens to multiple organizations and industries is the work of Freeman, Harrison, and Wicks (2007). Their prioritization of stakeholders placed them in two distinct categories, primary and secondary, based on which are most affected by and influential

to the organization. Primary, or definitional, stakeholders are usually financiers, customers, suppliers, employees, and community. These stakeholders were primary due to their direct impact and influence on athletic director's decisions. Secondary, or instrumental, stakeholders are more external to the organization than primary, and can also have an impact the primary stakeholders. Prioritization of stakeholders is one way for managers to conceptualize which stakeholder to attend to and when based on their perceived proximity to the organization. This study took into account these potential classification heuristics used by managers.

Application of stakeholder theory in various industries. Many industries have found advantages with utilizing stakeholder theory to provide strategies for how to engage and manage internal and external organizational relationships. The key to the next section is to show how two relevant industries, sport management and education, have applied and explored how stakeholder theory has been interpreted in their respective industries. Lessons learned from these industries have informed the current study in many ways, from identifying potential stakeholders to possible characteristics of the stakeholder relationship and how the context of these specific industries have impacted the application of stakeholder theory. The application of stakeholder theory to the relevant industries is presented in the following two sections.

Stakeholder theory in sport management literature. Various studies in sport management have applied stakeholder theory to understand the web of constituents that have a stake in sport; the majority of these articles have focused on the professional sport setting and the intercollegiate level. Friedman, Parent, and Mason (2004) utilized both professional and intercollegiate athletics when demonstrating how stakeholder theory can be applied to the sport setting when dealing with relationships and issues that arise. This study found that issue management requires the coordinated, proactive, and sustained approach to the management of

relationships with stakeholders. They called for researchers to draw attention to the process of stakeholder management. For example, certain teams have faced pressure to change their name and mascot away from Native American references, issues management would center on the change and stakeholder theory would apply to understanding stakeholder's opinions on the name change. In professional hockey, Mason and Slack (2001) evaluated attempts of stakeholder groups to find opportunistic behavior, particularly in changing environments. This study found that industry changes affect relationships, in particular how markets have an influence on relationships and the transfer of risk. In particular how agents have changed NHL player-agent relationships and the contracts that are negotiated because of this. These findings informed this study on how changes in the environment of education have impacted interscholastic sport stakeholders where the pressure to maintain athletic opportunities is on athletic directors and their ability to adapt to the changing environment in education.

Researchers exploring intercollegiate athletics have utilized the stakeholder approach most frequently when trying to understand who is important to attend to and what they are most interested in. Stakeholders to intercollegiate athletics have been identified as the NCAA, the U.S. government, coaches, non-student athletes, university teachers and administration, alumni, fans, community, and boosters to name a few (Covell, 2002; Putler & Wolfe, 1999). One of the most difficult aspects of intercollegiate athletic management, and sport in general, is trying to keep the support of critical stakeholders for the program during good times and bad (Trail & Chelladurai, 2002). History, tradition, institutional support, politics, and the legitimacy of the organization influences intercollegiate stakeholders (Peachey & Bruening, 2011); if the athletic department behaves in congruence with the core values and mission of the university, the athletic department influences the stakeholder's attitudes in a positive, approving way (Hutchinson &

Bennett, 2012). It was found that stakeholder group membership influenced what was most valuable to that group; for example, a factor such as education would be most important to university faculty members whereas winning would be most important to alumni (Putler & Wolfe, 1999). Within an athletic department, leadership has been found to play a key role in managing stakeholder relationships and stakeholder experiences within the organizational processes (Kihl, Liberman, & Schull, 2010), which may transfer to this study on interscholastic athletic departments due to similar hierarchical organizational structures. The intercollegiate level of sport is the most similar sport setting to interscholastic sport; both sport levels are situated in an educational setting and have similar stakeholder groups involved in that setting. The studies on intercollegiate athletics help bring various context and organizational concerns to the forefront when studying stakeholders in sport such as on-the-field success as well as history, tradition, and school goals for the inclusion of sport in educational settings. Therefore, this study took cues from what has been learned in intercollegiate stakeholder studies and applied those lessons and frames to interscholastic sport.

Stakeholder theory in education. Stakeholder theory in the field of education has not been fully developed. One trend that is calling attention to educational stakeholders is the movement toward participative involvement in education (Jacobson, 2009). This idea coincides with recent educational reform conversations that emphasize parents as key stakeholders that is justified by the role they have in educational success (Farrell & Jones, 2000; Marsh, Strunk, Bush-Mecenas, & Huguet, 2014; Sliwka & Instance, 2006). Besides focusing on parental engagement in education, policy reform is now centered on the engagement of the community and families as part of the school (Weiss, Lopez, & Rozenberg, 2010). These engagement tactics are inclined to draw in stakeholders to have them feel more connected to the decisions made in

the school and the school itself. One specific application of stakeholder theory in education centers on competing stakeholder rights of religion, safety, and equality in Canadian public schools (Shariff, 2006). The legal case was taken to the Canadian Supreme Court to decide how the increasingly diversified school systems deal with stakeholders' constitutional rights of religion, safety, and equality; the study developed a stakeholder model to unpack the events and help school officials navigate competing rights. Even so, Jacobson (2009) claims that educators are wary about adopting stakeholder management practices that are found in for-profit organizations into the education setting and possible shifts in the focus of education that may come because of this. This study used these applications of stakeholder theory to learn what factors might be impacting athletic directors of high schools when engaging stakeholders.

Managerial Decision-Making about Stakeholders

Stakeholder theory in broad terms is a portrayal of who managers find to be the most important individuals or groups to attend to. Donaldson and Preston (1995) describe this managerial lens of stakeholder theory because managers require simultaneous attention paid to stakeholders both in the development of organizational structures and processes as well as in case by case decision-making. Donaldson and Preston (1995) also assume that managers are individuals who are interested in and motivated to balance stakeholders' claims. The web of relationships that managers must attend to makes decisions both complex and political (Hickson et al., 1971). They are complex in the fact that there are high levels of uncertainty and precedent-setting consequences from decisions made; they are political because they represent multiple interests within the process. Many factors must be taken into account when making decisions surrounded by multiple stakeholders, external factors, resources, and individual level considerations (Shepard & Rudd, 2014).

Attention based view of stakeholder management. A key element of decision-making is where attention is drawn to and why. Attention based view on decision-making helps us understand how firms and individuals adapt to the changing environment due to the firm's attention structures. This viewpoint brings together a wide variety of cultural, social, cognitive, and economic mechanisms at multiple levels of analysis that shape how firms behave (Ocasio, 1997). Attention is a concept involving multi-level interrelated mechanisms and processes (Ocasio, 2011). Decision-making is limited to the attentional capacity of individuals to consider all issues and alternatives underlying each choice (Simon, 1947). Within the context of stakeholder management, individual managers have the ability to direct their attention and therefore the organization's attention toward particular issues on who is important to attend to and why. Organizational leaders therefore have the formal authority to prescribe interpretations for the organization, how their viewpoints shift during points of change can be significant to an organization's stakeholder management tactics (Isabella, 1990). Therefore, athletic directors have the ability to focus attention, situate attention, and structurally distribute attention (Ocasio, 1997) which centers them in the planning, problem solving, and conflict resolution of the management of stakeholders (Ocasio, 2011). Athletic directors may direct their attention toward internal or external stakeholders at various times throughout their management of stakeholders based on their own attention as well as the attention of the organization.

Individual influence factors in decision-making. The focus of decision-making literature about stakeholders is from the perspective of the individual manager, the manager is seen as the interpreter and identifier of stakeholder influence (Fineman & Clarke, 1996). Since managers are central to understanding stakeholder's characteristics and values which they must filter and process in order to make decisions (Winn, 2001), managers are charged with mediating

potential conflict that arises from diverging interests (Frooman, 1999). Therefore, individuals rely on heuristics which simplify the task of deciding (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974); individuals then tend to make decisions that are said to be 'good enough,' rather than the best possible option (Eisenhardt, 1977).

Another factor for an individual decision maker is understanding the relationships and conflicts that arise between stakeholder groups. Stakeholders and their relationships to managers are bounded by culture and history (Winn, 2001). Therefore, managers are said to be 'tenants of time and context' where they operate in a particular point in time within an organization's life (Leahy & Wilson, 1994, pg. 113). Different points of time and context change the politics brought to each decision. Political behavior has long been recognized as an aspect of decision-making and therefore, the responsibility of the manager to sort through (Child & Tsai, 2005; Wilson, 2003); the influence that political behavior has on a decision can be seen embedded in the decision processes and the outcomes (Elbanna, 2006). These characteristics are particularly true as athletic teams win and lose and athletes move through graduation, changing the landscape of stakeholders involved and the relationship characteristics of the stakeholder group constantly.

Decision-making about stakeholder management. While literature about how to manage stakeholders is limited, there are a few studies that attempt to understand the process that managers undergo to satisfy stakeholders and their concerns. Factors influencing their decisions may come from external environments to characteristics of the stakeholder relationship. The external organizational factors influence on decision-making can be hard to understand and control. We know that external organizational factors affect internal organizational decisions (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974). External environments of decisions encompass multiple material, social, and cultural factors both internal and external to the organization (Ocasio, 1997). One

way that external factors play a part in decision-making is through social relations; in particular, social influence has an effect on decision outcomes when uncertainty is present (Pfeffer et al., 1976). This is how multiple stakeholders, due to their social influence, can impact the decisions made by an athletic director.

Another external factor that plays a role in decision-making is resources. Schools are open systems which require a continuous flow of resources to survive and function (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978); open systems require schools to interact with individuals and organizations within their environment that control critical resources (Katz & Kahn, 1966). In the setting of this study, athletic directors must interact with various internal and external stakeholders in order to have access to the various types of necessary resources. This interaction process with individuals and organizations operates under intricate political and economic constraints in order to gain access to the necessary resources (Cyert & March, 1963; Freeman, 1979; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Zald, 1970).

We know that stakeholder classification and their locus influences decision-making (Tangpong, Li, & Johns, 2010). A key motivator behind stakeholder management is that decisions made are intended to be beneficial for both parties; this speaks to the norm of reciprocity regarding stakeholder classification which has been found to influence manager decision-making (Tangpong et al., 2010). Reynolds and colleagues (2006) looked at the process of the decisions made regarding satisfying stakeholders interests: within-decision and across-decision approach, both explained in more detail in Chapter I. It was found that managers use both approaches depending on the decision situation (Reynolds et al., 2006); however the across-decision approach was seen as more valuable for managers and organizations, and it was perceived to be more ethical. In conclusion, Reynolds and colleagues (2006) called for more

studies where the manager was centered in the decision-making process in order to more thoroughly understand the process behind stakeholder management.

Participative decision-making. One avenue that schools have been found to make decisions is through participative decision-making. Participative decision-making stems from organizational citizenship behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior is altruistic acts that contribute to the efficient functioning of the school (Bateman & Organ, 1983), these acts are usually above and beyond what employees are required to do. This trend is reflective of a shared belief that schools need a flatter management structure and one that has a decentralized authority with the intention of increasing school effectiveness (Somech, 2010). Schools are viewed as client-serving, bureaucratic organizations (Dipola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001), therefore participative decision-making is seen as contradictory to the normative bureaucratic structure. Even so, more schools are turning toward a participative decision-making model to engage various positions at the school, particularly teachers.

Participative decision-making in educational literature often refers to the practice of including subordinates in the decision-making process, which in most administrative decisions are teachers. Utilizing this decision-making framework is thought to improve the quality of the decisions by bridging the knowledge of the classroom and critical knowledge of the teachers to the administrators making the decisions (Guzzo, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). It is also meant to create a short cut from the problems in the classroom to those making the decision to change those problems (Durham, Knight, & Locke, 1997). Participative decision-making is therefore said to enhance involvement and commitment to the decision (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975; Fullan, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Participative decision-making may be found in athletics as well as with relationships between the athletic director and the superintendent or principal or

with relationships between the athletic director and coaches. Parents may also be more concerned as we see 'helicopter parents' or 'lawnmower parents' being involved with their children's lives through clearing all obstacles in their child's way toward success.

Although participative decision-making can take many forms, Hoy and Tarter (1993) describe five key structures to participative decision-making. The first is group consensus where the group reaches a consensus of all its members. Secondly, there is what they refer to as a group decision where the decision is made by the majority of the group. Still, other forms of participative decision making are done with an advisory capacity, where the administrator seeks input of a group and an individual for advice. In either of these advisory structures the decision-maker may still make their decision on their own which may not reflect the advice that they received. Lastly, there is always the option for a decision-maker to make the decision without consulting anyone. No matter what participative decision-making process is used, the concept of participating in the process has been associated with an increase in perceived supervisor and organizational support (Reeves, Walsh, Tuller, & Magley 2012). Those who seek this collectivistic approach are likely to seek out this participative model to help benefit the group, even if there are personal implications for this decision process (Kemmelmeier, Burnstein, Krumov, Genkova, Kanagawa, & Hirshberg, 2003). The idea of participative decision-making in schools is relatively novel and challenges many normative beliefs about how schools should function and be structured.

Conceptual Framework

In an effort to tie together the theory behind stakeholder management, a conceptual framework was posed (See Figure 2). This study focused on an individual level of analysis and therefore placed athletic directors at the center of the conceptual framework. One goal of the

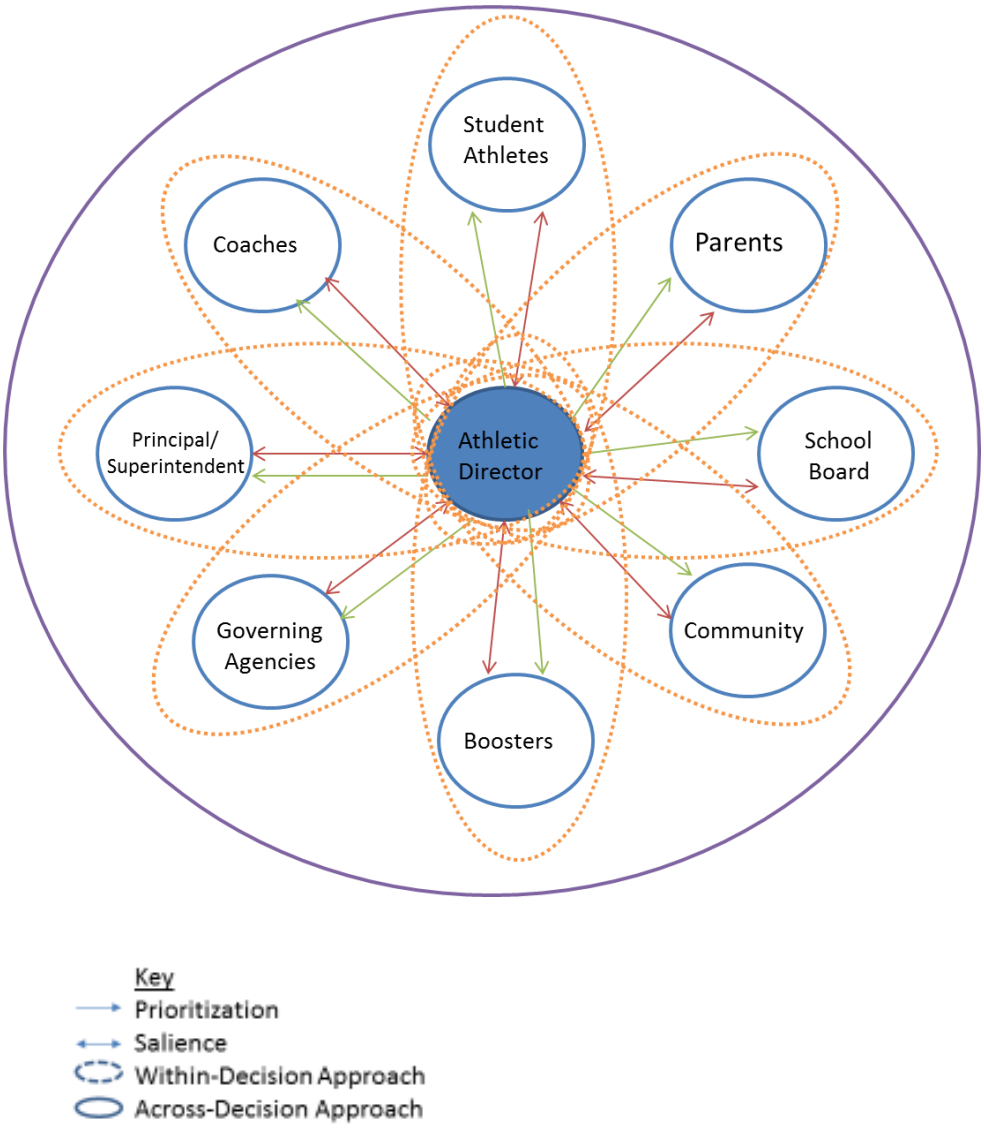
framework was to identify possible stakeholders to high school athletic directors based on literature on intercollegiate stakeholders as well as education literature on stakeholders. Stakeholders are depicted surrounding the athletic director: student-athletes, parents, coaches, principals/superintendents, school boards, boosters, community, and governing agencies. Within each stakeholder's relationship with the athletic director there is a level of salience based on power, urgency, and legitimacy; salience is a stakeholder relationship characteristic that works in both directions to and from the athletic director and therefore is portrayed with a double sided arrow. Another stakeholder relationship characteristic that is depicted is the prioritization. Due to the individual level of analysis in this study, prioritization is therefore one directional, from the athletic director to the individual stakeholder, and is portrayed with an arrow starting at the athletic director and connects with the stakeholder.

With regard to stakeholder decision-making literature, the conceptual framework sought to portray the findings of the Reynolds and colleagues study of across decision approach and within decision approach. A within decision approach considers stakeholders independently with each decision; with each decision each stakeholder has an equal opportunity to be taken into account. This is portrayed through the dotted line surrounding the individual stakeholder and the athletic director alone. The across decision approach which tries to evenly consider stakeholders across decisions is depicted by the solid line around all of the stakeholders, where all stakeholders are taken into account and balanced for all decisions.

This conceptual framework aimed to depict the complicated nature of the relationships that surround high school athletics and how decisions are made surrounding the management of athletic department stakeholder relationships; it was used as a starting point to understand what might be impacting athletic director decision-making regarding the management of stakeholders.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework



Summary

The aim of this study was to understand how athletic directors engage in stakeholder management. The theoretical framing posed in this chapter allowed for an understanding of key factors that influence stakeholder management with the expectation that there is more to the process of stakeholder management than the described particular characteristics and decision approaches. The theoretical gap resides within the individual level analysis of the process of stakeholder management.

CHAPTER III

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This study sought to understand how athletic directors engage in the process of stakeholder management. Chapter three outlines the methods utilized for this study. First an introduction to the methods chosen is presented, followed by a brief synopsis of the methods of relevant empirical work discussed. Then, the research sample, design, data collection, and data analysis are given followed by the reliability and validity of the items used in the survey instrument.

I conducted a two-step semi-sequential approach to understand the decision process of stakeholder management utilizing interviews and questionnaires. Interviews were conducted first to build a basis for understanding the position and discretion that athletic directors have as there is not established literature for this role. Preliminary findings from the interviews with athletic directors aided in the development of the questionnaire; interviews continued while the questionnaire was distributed. Using qualitative methods first allowed for exploration of the problem, while following up with survey data collection helped in inferring the results to a larger population (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative findings were considered the core driving component of this study while the quantitative findings were the supplementary component (Morse & Niehaus, 2009), meaning the quantitative findings were meant to enhance the qualitative findings. Using both approaches allowed each process to compliment the other in order to more

fully understand and accurately portray the process of stakeholder management within the decision-making context of high school athletic directors.

Engaging in a mixed methods approach allowed information about different aspects of the process of stakeholder management in the decision-making context of interscholastic athletic directors to be captured (Greene, 2007). The goal of engaging in mixed methods was to minimize the weaknesses and draw upon the strengths of each approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Three stated purposes of mixed methods that were utilized in this study were: purposes of development, complementarity, and triangulation (Greene, 2007). In this study, the qualitative interviews helped with the development of the questionnaire. Conducting the interviews first granted a more direct learning of the context and frames used by athletic directors; this allowed for contextualization of the questionnaire by using specific frames and questions to ensure a complete understanding of the participant's experiences as athletic directors. Understanding the context, and the familiar, natural language used amongst athletic directors (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) helped standardize and focus the questionnaire to elicit a better response rate.

Complementarity and triangulation were also seen as reasons for using a mixed methods design. The second purpose behind utilizing a mixed methods approach in this study was that of complementarity (Greene, 2007). Complementarity in using qualitative methods before the quantitative methods provided a deeper understanding of the context of high school athletics and processes involved in the management of stakeholders while using the quantitative data more for applicability with more athletic directors. Data triangulation (Denzin, 1970) in this study served the purpose of convergence of data from multiple perspectives into results (Bryman, 2006; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989) in order to understand the problem of stakeholder

management from multiple perspectives across the same organizational position. The reason for using mixed methods in this study was to attempt to confirm and cross-validate findings, due to the exploration of stakeholder management in high school athletics.

Previous Stakeholder Management Research Methods

A review of previous literature on managing stakeholders shows that various methodological approaches have been utilized. In the sport context, stakeholder theory has been understood through case study methodologies most frequently. For instance, Kihl et al. (2007) and Hutchinson and Bennett (2012) both evaluated one intercollegiate athletic department and their multiple stakeholders. When looking at key methodological approaches to understanding decision-making about stakeholders, Kochan and Rubenstein (2000) utilized a case study of Saturn motor company through qualitative interviews and survey methodology. Reynolds and colleagues (2006) used MBA students to respond to vignettes enabling an individual level analysis. Although case studies reveal a certain depth of stakeholder management in one setting, this study enhances our understanding of stakeholder management through an individual level of analysis across many organizations which extends the individual level analysis focus set forth by Reynolds and colleagues (2006).

The methodological approach utilized in this study looked at various athletic director's decision-making processes regarding the management of stakeholders, which helped enhance our understanding of stakeholder theory in multiple ways. There have been various calls to understand stakeholder theory in different types of organizations and industries (Laplume et al., 2008; Phillips, Freeman, & Wicks, 2003); this study begun to fill this call with using stakeholder theory in a secondary education setting. Besides utilizing stakeholder theory in a new context, there has been a call for an understanding of the decision-making process surrounding

stakeholders (Wagner Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2011; Reynolds et al., 2006). This study sought to understand how athletic directors engage in stakeholder management; the mixed methodological approach allowed for extensions in our understanding of stakeholder management.

Research Sample

For this study, I examined one position across many organizations. In particular public high school athletic directors in Michigan were the target of this study. High school athletic directors have to account for various internal and external stakeholders in their position when making decisions; they have to manage internal stakeholder priorities and goals from coaches, principals, superintendents, and administration, as well as external stakeholder priorities and goals from the community, parents, and booster club members. Public high schools were the focus in this study due to private schools not being under the same statewide regulations and financial constraints as public schools; because of this, private schools may have different stakeholders and stakeholder relationships due to their funding structure. Limiting the sample to one state also helped control for state-to-state educational policy differences, for example Michigan funds education through sales and other use taxes where many states utilize property taxes. There were distinctive sampling techniques to choose athletic directors for the interview portion of the study and for the questionnaire portion, both are described in the following sections.

Interviews. When athletic directors were recruited for the interview portion of the study, a stratified sampling technique was used. A purposeful selection allowed for representativeness of diverse school settings to allow for rich data to be gathered (Patton, 2002). This sampling technique also allowed for maximum variation in responses to be present (Guba & Lincoln,

1989), as well as the opportunity for comparisons to be made that highlight differences in stakeholder management strategies (Creswell, 2013).

There are two key school-level factors that described and diversified the types of schools represented in this stratified purposeful sample: free and reduced lunch program and urbanicity (Kena, Aud, Johnson, Wang, Zhang, Rathbun, Wilkinson-Flicker, & Kristapovich, 2014). The percentage of children on the free and reduced lunch program is often used as a wealth measure of a district; therefore, it will be included as one school-level characteristic in this study. Four categories were created based on percentage of students on the free and reduced lunch program: 0-24.9% low poverty, 25-49.9% low-mid level poverty, 50-74.9% mid-high level poverty, and 75% and up to be classified as a high poverty school. The other school-level factor that will be taken into account in sampling was the urbanicity of the community, creating three categories: city/urban schools, suburban schools, and town/rural schools. These two school-level factors were found in the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data. The Common Core of Data is the Department of Education's annual collection of data on fiscal and non-fiscal data about all public schools. With these two characteristics in mind, a four by three matrix sampling strategy was employed, two to three targeted interviews were conducted in each characteristic cell. Table 1 represents the number of interviews conducted in each cell, highlighting the totals for each category at the right and bottom.

Table 1

Interview Participant Matrix

	SES				
Urbanicity	0-24.9%	25-49.9%	50-74.9%	75%+	**TOTAL**
City/Urban	2	2	3	4	**11**
Suburban	4	4	1	0	**9**
Rural	3	3	2	2	**10**
TOTAL	**9**	**9**	**6**	**6**	

Athletic directors were recruited via email, and were targeted based on the stratified sampling technique. The email stated the purpose of the study and requested their participation, preferably in person or over the phone when necessary. When there was no response after the initial email was sent, two weeks later another athletic director was drawn from within the school characteristic cell of the nonresponse participant. In total, thirty interviews with athletic directors from various schools based on socioeconomic status and urbanicity were conducted as shown in Table 1.

Questionnaire. For the questionnaire portion of the study, participants were drawn using all Michigan public high school athletic directors. According to the Common Core of Data, there are 648 public high schools in Michigan that served as the school population. A database was built using email addresses for athletic directors obtained from the MHSAA website. A request for participation email was sent to all public high school athletic directors including a description of the study along with the link to the Qualtrics survey.

Research Design

Interviews. The design of the interviews was molded around the methodological traditions of ethnographic interviews. This methodological tradition is highly concerned with the meaning of actions and events from the people we seek to understand because the participants

have personal experiences, understand the interpersonal dynamics, and cultural meanings of their social world (Spradley, 1979). The interview sought to empower the interviewees to shape their cultural meanings (Wolcott, 1982) and develop an ongoing, co-constructive relationship with the research (Heyl, 2001). The interviews were semi-structured in nature; this design allowed for dialogue that reached the depth and density from each respondent on the topic at hand (Weiss, 1994). Allowing the interview to have a dynamic nature granted a space for the participants to make sense of what has happened and how this has informed their decision process surrounding the management of stakeholders (Maxwell, 2013). The interviews aimed to capture a detailed description of the process of decision-making behind the management of stakeholders (Weiss, 1994).

The interview guide was structured according to the guidelines set forth by Weiss (1994). This approach guides the interview from open, broad questions to more specific, example based questions. The interview began with open-ended questions around "What decisions do you get to make in your role as athletic director?" and "How do you decide which person/group to tend to with each decision?" The examples of decision processes given in early questions served as primers for subsequent questions to be more targeted using specific examples and frames that were referred to by participants. For instance, if the athletic director talked about changing the eligibility policy in their school district, follow up questions centered around how that happened, who was involved, what did their involvement look like? After athletic directors described a decision-making process, questions were directed toward how athletic directors balanced various stakeholder interests and priorities. Lastly, athletic directors were asked, "How do you measure success for the department?" and if success is measured the same way by various stakeholders. Interviews were structured to understand the context that they make

decisions in first followed by questions that aimed to understand how they interacted with stakeholders in various capacities. The goal of the interview was to gain a broad scope of the landscape of stakeholders to high school athletics and the decisions athletic directors get to make, as well as the decision-making process behind stakeholder management. To see the full interview guide refer to Appendix A.

Questionnaire. The design of the questionnaire was a two-step process. The first portion was created based on previously made contributions to stakeholder theory and decision-making literature. This step involved adapting previous questionnaires to fit the unit of analysis for this study; adaptations are discussed in the following paragraphs. The second phase of development came from information gleaned in the interviews which provided clarification surrounding the high school sport context and the process of stakeholder management by high school athletic directors. The first questions asked were based on previous theoretical contributions with regards to stakeholder relationship characteristics. Then questions of decision approach were asked; they included 7-point Likert scale statements surrounding what they considered major decisions within their role as well as the process they used with making major and minor decisions. Lastly, basic descriptive information was gathered about participation rates, participation opportunities, and demographic information about gender, tenure, race, and past roles. These sections are all discussed in more detail.

When adapting previous work to this study, I combined the acknowledged intercollegiate stakeholders from previous studies (Covell, 2002; Putler & Wolfe, 1999) with the recognized stakeholders of educational settings (Weiss et al., 2010), as well as the stakeholders discussed in the interviews. These adaptations allowed for a rank ordered question revolving around

prioritization of stakeholders as this is said to be one of the first steps in the management of stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2007).

The second section of questions centered on what stakeholder relationship characteristics influence decision-making. These questions were adapted based on previous work on stakeholder influence strategies outlined by Frooman (1999) and stakeholder salience outlined by Mitchell and colleagues (1997). A survey conducted by Agle, Mitchell, and Sonnenfield (1999) asked questions of CEOs based on stakeholder power, urgency, and legitimacy, and was adapted for this setting. An example statement from their Likert scale survey was "This stakeholder group exhibited urgency in its relationship with our firm." This statement and various others from their survey with Likert scale answers were adapted in this questionnaire. Buysee and Verbeke (2003) also used Likert scales to discern stakeholder pressures on decisions, therefore Likert scales have been shown to provide participants opportunity to express their interactions with stakeholders.

The third set of questions centered on the decision process. Questions were first asked based on which decisions they make that they labeled as major decisions. A 7-point Likert scale was used alongside the decisions that athletic directors stated they made during the interviews. This provided a priority perspective of decisions made. Then the survey asked questions about what I refer to as the decision process. During the interview many participants reflected on using committees and various versions of cooperation with stakeholders when making decisions. Some athletic directors also distinctly stated making decisions on their own. Questions were asked based on these frames. Then, questions were adapted from the findings of Reynolds and colleagues (2006), as decision processes capture how the salience and prioritization get taken into account when managing the stakeholder relationship. Since Reynolds used vignettes to set

the scene for decision-making of stakeholders, the vignette questions did not line up well with this questionnaire format, therefore this study adapted their findings into questions about decision approaches utilized when managing stakeholders.

A small section of questions were asked regarding support since many athletic directors during the interviews highlighted how important they felt that was to their job success. The support they most frequently referred to was that from their direct supervisor, often the principal. Questions were adapted from Kottke and Sharafinski's (1988) work on measuring perceived supervisory and organizational support; questions from their survey were adapted to ensure context specific relevant adaptation to high school sport.

Lastly, questions entailed personal demographic information like gender, race, and tenure. Participants were also inquired about the title of their current role as well as tenure at their current position and tenure as an athletic director in all districts. School-level information was also asked, from MHSAA class designation regarding student enrollment (Class A 875 student enrollment and above; Class B 420-874 students; Class B 213-419 students; Class D 212 and fewer students) to estimated participation rates of boys and girls.

In total the survey contained mostly close-ended questions, with participants choosing from a limited number of responses (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The survey was eighteen questions long and participants took anywhere from five to twenty minutes on average to complete the questionnaire (M=14.2 minutes, SD=19.9). The structure of the questionnaire asked the substantive questions first and the demographic questions last to ensure the highest possible return rate (Roberson & Sundstrom, 1990). Refer to Appendix B for the questionnaire.

Data Collection

Interviews. In total, 65 participants were contacted with 30 accepting participation in the study. Once participation was accepted via email, a mutually agreed upon time and place was set for the interview. Interviews were mainly conducted at the school where the athletic director was located or over the phone. Interviews lasted approximately an hour and were recorded to ensure accurate description and collection of data. Immediately following each interview, I wrote a brief memo to highlight emergent themes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim either by myself or a transcriptionist. Data collected within the interviews informed the questionnaire by understanding the context specific issues and factors that shape athletic directors' management of stakeholders; this allowed for a more accurate and thorough investigation to occur in the questionnaire. Participants were sent appreciation emails after their completion of the interview. Interview participant data can be found in Table 2, MHSAA classification was gathered from the organization's directory, other school-level characteristics came from the NCES Common Core Data.

Table 2

Descriptives of Interview Participants

Pseudonym	AD Tenure	Enrollment	MHSAA Class	Urbanicity	% Female Students	% on Free and Reduced Lunch
Rick	12	1516	A	Urban	49.5%	65.60%
Jules	2	1088	A	Urban	50.0%	91%
Emmett	2	874	A	Rural	45.3%	11%
Chris	35	251	C	Rural	45.0%	49.80%
Reuben	2	790	B	Urban	48.6%	85.90%
Josiah	10	616	B	Suburban	48.7%	38.10%
Elwood	1	875	A	Urban	48.5%	90.40%
Gene	5	1826	A	Urban	46.6%	43.50%
Bart	15	320	C	Rural	50.6%	78.10%
Camron	1	95	D	Rural	47.4%	89.50%
Lou	1.5	1501	A	Urban	48.9%	19.80%
Wally	12	1979	A	Urban	48.3%	13.80%
Collin	20	636	B	Suburban	51.9%	8.80%
Dane	5	255	C	Rural	55.3%	52.90%
Josh	12	1908	A	Suburban	50.0%	47.40%
Barry	4	666	B	Suburban	49.5%	30%
Alex	3	1738	A	Suburban	49.5%	43.40%
Edison	1	1822	A	Suburban	46.7%	6.60%
Tylor	2	2082	A	Suburban	50.4%	15.50%
Mike	9	1143	A	Urban	48.7%	67.60%
James	9	195	D	Rural	57.4%	60.50%
Evan	2	1176	A	Rural	49.6%	8.80%
Matt	2	599	B	Urban	49.7%	79.30%
Miles	1	447	B	Rural	48.5%	47.20%
Sheldon	15	1359	A	Urban	47.6%	56.80%
Todd	15	1766	A	Urban	50.9%	35.10%
Bert	19	853	B	Suburban	55.1%	64.10%
Copy	3	973	A	Suburban	50.1%	5.90%
Judd	2	1328	A	Rural	49.5%	40.90%
Willy	15	399	C	Rural	42.9%	18%

Questionnaire. Data collection for the questionnaire was done by contacting all public high school athletic directors. An email describing the study and requesting participation in the questionnaire was sent along with the link to the Qualtrics survey, an online survey software

provider. Email reminders were sent to participants three times after the initial email was sent, all on different days at different times during the week with the hope of getting the attention of the participants. Follow up thank-you emails were sent after completion of the survey. Collection of data closed approximately one month after the initial survey was sent out. Descriptive information about questionnaire respondents can be found in Table 3. A total of 248 questionnaires were collected with 177 with complete data, creating a 27.3% response rate. Further, I must also acknowledge that the response rate is relatively low and may have biased the results of the study. However, response rates in web based surveys have been dropping over the past several years and some researchers have found no differences in risky health behaviors between respondents and non-respondents (McCabe, Cranford, Boyd, & Teter, 2007; McCluskey & Topping, 2009). Descriptive data for the quantitative portion section comes from multiple sources; the Common Core of Data provided school-level characteristics, while the Office of Civil Rights Data provided participation rates and participation opportunity rates. Both sets of data were merged with the information gathered in the questionnaire to have more complete information on each athletic director, their school, and their department.

Table 3

Quantitative Demographic Characteristics

Gender		
	Men	62.0%
	Women	7.0%
	Missing	31.0%
Race		
	White	64.3%
	Black	2.5%
	Hispanic	1.2%
	Other	40.0%
	Missing	31.6%
Tenure		
	Current Position	7.89 years
	Total AD	9.56 years
Currently Coaching		23.8%
	Past Coaching	68.0%
Currently Teaching		15.6%
	Past Teacher	24.6%
MHSAA Classification		
	Class A	29.8%
	Class B	30.4%
	Class C	20.2%
	Class D	19.6%
Title		
	Athletic Director	58.4%
	Athletic Director/Assistant Principal	21.1%
	AD/Administrative Role	13.3%
	AD/Teacher	4.8%
	AD/Principal	1.8%
	AD/AP/Coach	0.6%

Data Analysis

Interviews. Analysis of the data began as soon as data collection was underway (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). First, a review was done of memos written after the completion of each interview, this provided a background on familiar themes and initial insights which helped inform initial coding. All coding analysis was done in the qualitative data software management program NVivo. Initial coding was inductive in nature. Initial open coding set out to capture new insights based on what the data explains about participants' experiences in the management of stakeholders (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Open codes centered on organizational structure and hierarchy, support, and outcomes to name a few. Then, substantive categories were used to develop inductive coding themes throughout the coding process; those codes referenced the athletic department context, resource strategies, and pressures (Maxwell, 2013). Inductive analysis highlighted various elements in decision-making from prioritization of decisions, internal and external organizational support, communication, and the processes involved in making decisions, as examples. Inductive coding allowed space for emergent themes to be highlighted (Thomas, 2006).

The second coding of the qualitative data was deductive in nature. Predetermined deductive theoretical categories (Maxwell, 2013) in the second phase of coding centered on definitions of stake and stakeholder as well as any influence strategy and relationship characteristics highlighted, decision processes were also sought out in this phase. This coding process allowed for predetermined theoretical insights to emerge while making notes of what information was not covered in coding. Inductive coding and deductive coding themes were integrated to look for relationships between codes. Doing a matrix analysis between codes allowed for an exposure of linkages of inductive and deductive coding. The notes of what was

not covered created a new list of codes for a third round of analysis to capture remaining highlights. Refer to Appendix C for a list of codes.

Another level of analysis was conducted in order to search for connections of themes with school level characteristics as well as word frequency analysis. Interviews were all coded with respective school characteristics of urbanicity (rural, suburban, and urban) and socioeconomic status (low, low-mid, mid-high, and high poverty). This coding allowed for matrix analysis to be conducted based on a school-level characteristic with inductive and deductive codes. Coding in this way allowed for trends based on urbanicity and socioeconomic status to emerge. Word frequency analysis was conducted to see what themes were talked about most frequently, particularly when it comes to the prioritization of stakeholders as well as types of decisions.

Questionnaire. Analysis of the questionnaire data had a much different approach and consisted of many layers of analysis. The first phase of the analysis was to look through descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics provided a summary of the data in a meaningful way in order to let patterns emerge in the data. Descriptive statistics also allowed for an understanding of who the population of athletic directors were that participated. Descriptive statistics were a sufficient analysis for some of the questions posed; these questions were asked directly to supplement the qualitative findings.

The next method of analysis was various forms of regression analysis. Binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to see if associations exist between those who made major decisions through utilizing committees or those who made major decisions on their own and various independent variables of school-level characteristics (Long, 1997; Montgomery, Peck, & Vining, 2013). Dependent variables were motivated by the responses during the interviews and

how athletic directors either referenced committees or not. Independent variables consisted of school level variables such as MHSAA classification, urbanicity, and the socioeconomic status determined by the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, and the percentage of white students at the school. Individual level characteristics that also served as independent variables were included, such as gender, tenure, and race. Due to the dependent variable being binary in nature, a binary logistic approach was the most appropriate form of analysis.

Similar analysis was done with ordinary least squared regression analysis with dependent variables of participation rates and gender equity ratios of sports participants (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991). This analysis was motivated to understand if decision-making strategy and school level factors, MHSAA classification, urbanicity, and socioeconomic status were associated with higher participation rates or gender equity ratios. Therefore, the decision-making strategy, MHSAA classification, urbanicity, and socioeconomic status were the independent variables for the ordinary least squared regression analysis. This allowed for exploration of possible factors lending themselves to higher or lower participation rates or gender equity ratios. This analysis was also done to see if any of the descriptive data and the decision-making process (alone or by committee) had an association with higher participation rates or gender equity ratios. Lastly, adjusted odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals were calculated.

Validity and Reliability

The design of this study was afforded particular benefits from the two modes of data collection. One benefit of using two modes of data collection is the ability to triangulate information from various data sources (Erickson, 1985; Fielding & Fielding, 1986). Triangulation allowed for checking of results between the interviews and the questionnaire in order to provide more confidence and trustworthiness in the findings. Using multiple sources of

data also allowed for comparison across sources and findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Comparison was done between data sources to allow for discrepant and negative cases to be acknowledged.

When looking for validity within my quantitative data sample, I first examined if the answers from the survey were coinciding with what was found in the qualitative portion of the study. This method of comparing survey responses with those of the interviews is external validity. There were some distinct similarities such as how they prioritized stakeholders, the characteristics of the stakeholder relationships, and the prioritization of decisions. Another source of external validity was to check if those who took my survey created a representative sample of the population of high school athletic directors in Michigan. This analysis found that there was a correlation (.633, $p<.001$) between the sample of my respondents and all possible respondents in the state of Michigan. Correlations were run based on self-reported number of sports teams and the number of teams reported in the Office of Civil Rights Data collection, comparing responses allowed for an exploration of correlation. Although no correlation between respondents is ever perfect, I feel confident that the sample that has responded to my questionnaire is relatively representative of the population of athletic directors in Michigan.

When looking for reliability in qualitative studies, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, "since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]" (pg. 522). Besides using triangulation, another method of confirming the validity and reliability of the qualitative data was to use peer debriefing. Peer debriefing has been shown to establish the trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and increases the credibility of the project (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). These discussions are said to understand how personal perspectives and values influence the findings and therefore

minimize the bias within the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Peer briefing contributes to the confirmation of the findings and that the interpretations are worthy, honest, and believable (Spall, 1998). Peer debriefing was used with some athletic directors, some that were participants of the study and others who were not involved and were not swayed by what was occurring within the study.

With regards to the quantitative portion of the study, reliability was searched for between variables for internal consistency. For instance, when looking at bivariate correlations there was an acceptable correlation between the participants stating school board controlling resources and their claim regarding decisions surrounding resources the correlation was significant using a 2-tailed test at a .01 significance level (r=.760, p<.001). Another example was the correlation between the response about the principal and superintendent having influence on athletic department decision-making and their involvement in decision-making; participants responded similarly to both statements. Therefore there was a significant correlation using the same 2-tailed test (r=.242, p<.001). To further test reliability, a factor analysis led to significant Cronbach alpha's. Factor analysis was conducted regarding the prioritization of decisions made by athletic directors. The participants responded similarly to allow for a categorization of major and minor decisions by athletic directors that was similar to interview participants. Major administrative tasks had a Chronbach alpha of .785 and other tasks which could be labeled as more minor and routine decisions scored a Chronbach alpha of .85. Due to the fact that this population has not undergone research of this nature reliability has to come from within the test measurement.

Summary

The mixed methods of this study used both interviews and a questionnaire allowing for an interpretive approach to understand the process of stakeholder management to interscholastic athletic directors. This dual approach supported the development of the process through the interviews and the breadth of the process to develop in the questionnaire. This study has enhanced our understanding of the decision-making process around the management of stakeholders.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results from the qualitative interviews as well as the questionnaire; the findings from the interviews are presented first, followed by the questionnaire results. Key emergent themes are presented starting with the identification of stakeholders and the characteristics of those relationships followed by the decision-making processes. Also, this chapter highlights athletic directors' goals for their athletic department. A discussion and conceptual framework are given at the conclusion of this chapter.

Identifying Stakeholders and Stakeholder Characteristics

One of the founding elements to discern how athletic directors make decisions on stakeholder management is to understand who they identified as stakeholders. The following section describes this; stakeholder groups will be presented in order of perceived importance to the athletic director in the qualitative and quantitative sections. Prioritization is said to be the first step when managing stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2007) and characteristics of urgency, legitimacy, and power in a stakeholder relationship determine the level of salience (Mitchell et al., 1997). While no question regarding the prioritization of stakeholders was directly asked during the interviews, interviews were analyzed based on which stakeholders were most frequently mentioned. Word frequency analysis was used and then categories were collapsed based on references meaning the same group, for example 'students' and 'kids' are referring to the same stakeholder group and therefore were condensed to the same category labeled student-

athletes. Stakeholders will be presented based on Freeman et al.'s work (2007) on prioritization beginning with primary stakeholders followed by secondary stakeholders.

Primary Stakeholders. The two most important stakeholders to an athletic director were those that (s)he serves, the student-athletes, and those that (s)he manages, the coaches. These were the two most frequently mentioned stakeholders. Quotations will be presented to describe how the athletic director felt about each stakeholder group and what about their relationship with that stakeholder makes them important.

Student-Athletes. Athletic directors discussed and referred to the central role that student-athletes played for them by stating, "First and foremost my priorities are my kids" (Dane; Rural, Mid-High Poverty) and "I'm an advocate for the kids." (Josh; Suburan, Low-Mid Poverty). These quotes were found often amongst athletic directors; they directly labeled how important student-athletes are for them. The reason that athletic directors prioritized student-athletes was due to the impact athletics can have on student success on and off the field and that the student-athletes provided athletic directors with motivation behind their role.

When referring to student-athletes, athletic directors often described the benefits that athletics afforded students and how they valued the opportunities that athletics afforded students. Although these findings were not particularly surprising, they were confirmatory in that stakeholders with frequent interaction created a closer relationship with the athletic director and were perceived as most important (Weick, 2001). Although athletic directors universally agreed that student-athletes are the most important stakeholder group, the reason for their focus differed based on the socioeconomic status of the community of where that the school was situated. Those at higher levels of socioeconomic status focused on how athletics compliments the academic endeavors of the students, whereas those from lower socioeconomic communities used

athletics as a driving force to getting students into the classrooms. The following few paragraphs explains the importance of athletics in students' lives and how and why student-athletes were a prioritized stakeholder to athletic directors. The importance of athletics in students' lives explains the stake that athletic directors believe they create for student-athletes. The characteristics described by athletic directors may lead toward a deeper understanding of the different characteristics that may be important to secondary education stakeholder relationships, or other service based organizations, than stakeholders of corporate organizations. Another important factor is to understand the role of the stakeholder who is being served by the organization because often they may not have the high levels of power, urgency, or legitimacy as other key decision-making stakeholders.

In lower socioeconomic schools, athletics was used as a leveraging tool to get student-athletes to be more engaged in the classroom in order to be academically eligible to participate. Therefore, their education was used as a stake for student-athletes at low socioeconomic schools. Athletic directors of such schools were more aware and concerned with basic needs of the students like food and transportation to and from events in order for them to even participate. For example, Matt from an urban, high poverty school stated, "Athletics is a huge piece of getting the kids here and keeping the kids here." A similar sentiment was shared by Elwood (Urban, High Poverty) who was new to the position at this particular school but wanted to use athletics as a change agent for the school as a whole, "My hopes here is to use that [athletics] as kind of -- social experiment to use the athletic program to turn around the academic program. We get our kids to graduate and go to school -- schools all over the country." His vision was to use the draw of athletics in order to propel change within the school as well as within the lives of the student-athletes. He wasn't alone in this sentiment, other athletic directors had similar

thoughts of change for the school coming from what can be done within and through athletics, "I'm trying to make this a good school from the athletic department" (Jules; Urban, High Poverty). In total, athletic directors at low socioeconomic status schools want to uplift students and help use the skills from athletics to make them a better citizen. For example Judd, an athletic director from a rural, mid-high level poverty school stated:

> You know if they enjoy athletics, they come out a better person. You're probably aware and heard that athletics have saved a lot of kids that may have fallen through the cracks. And the only thing that saved them was a caring coach and athletic experience and maybe put them on the track to learning life skills that will make them a better student, a better worker, a better husband, and better wife down the road. (Judd)

Whereas, athletic directors in higher socioeconomic communities did not emphasize trying to get students into the classroom they focused on the balance between academics and athletics and how that was central to their stakeholder management when dealing with student-athletes. This balance between education and athletics was often referred to as 'educational athletics,' which was how athletic directors viewed their stake. Such as this comment by Wally, an athletic director from an urban, low poverty school district, "Sports is a supportive program for academic success; get kids to do what they're supposed to do and balance." Coby (Suburban, Low Poverty) had a similar sentiment in that, "Where my beliefs are the athletic field is a classroom and that's where you need to have great instruction going on and it may not be algebra or physics, but there are lots of learning opportunities in the arena." Many felt that elevating athletics to be seen as a classroom can help provide opportunities that go beyond winning and losing, "My philosophy has always been educational athletics and that's what I preach to our coaches. We want to provide an experience sort of beyond winning and losing games" (Miles; Rural, Low-Mid Poverty).

The support for the concept of educational athletics was found within the school district as well. Edison (Suburban; Low Poverty) noted how the district as an organization impacts the philosophy of the provision of athletics, "The board of education has decided to run interscholastic athletics with student-athletes as an extension of the classroom as extracurricular activities." At the program level, athletic directors want their stakeholders to hold athletics up to a high standard, "Ultimately we want athletics to be as equal partner or viewed as an equal partner in the entire educational process; there are those three A's of education, academics, arts, and the athletics (Lou; Urban, Low Poverty)."

Coaches. When talking about their coaches, athletic directors made comments similar to these two: "A lot of times our coaches are the most influential people in these kids' lives" (Tylor; Suburban, Low Poverty) or "I want to see the connection between the coaches and the kids long-term, beyond high school (Rick; Urban, Mid-High Poverty)." Coaches were referred to as a conduit to the success of the student-athlete's experience and therefore describing their stake as an influential role to the student-athletes, which is why they were considered a high priority to athletic directors as they were the second most frequently mentioned stakeholder group. As Jules stated, what he looks for in a coach, "We needed a guy that was going to get kids into the program and enjoy themselves." In the end, many athletic directors talked about the shortage of coaches available and accredited this to the influence that external stakeholders can have on their position such as what Chris (Rural, Low-Mid Poverty) said, "It is hard to find people that want to coach these days because of all the grief [from parents] they take and all of that." This comment shows how one stakeholder group can impact other stakeholder groups by their actions. Parents actions can impact the coaches and their willingness to stay with a program or not. Their behavior toward a coach can impact the role of the athletic director by either having to manage

the exchanges between those two stakeholder groups or in the hiring of new coaches because parents force a coach out of their role.

Therefore, the two most prioritized stakeholders to the athletic director were those that they are responsible for, the student-athletes, and those that they manage, the coaches. This is interesting because we can see that those with the most frequent interaction with the manager tended to be the stakeholder that is most highly prioritized. In turn, frequency of contact with the manager may play a role in their stakeholder management decision-making process. With the concept of athletic directors serving students, their interaction with student-athletes is most important to them and their influence indirectly over their athletic experience is through coaches which is why their interaction with coaches is so important.

Principals/Superintendents. After student-athletes and coaches, the next most frequently mentioned stakeholder was those individuals to whom athletic directors directly reported. Although the structure can vary across schools (see Chapter II for a review) athletic directors most frequently mentioned their next important stakeholder as the principal. In most school structures, the athletic director reports to the principal. For example, these two quotations, "I go to the principal first and we'll go over it and go to the superintendent if it is a big issue (Alex; Suburban, Low-Mid Poverty)" and "I think I have many supervisors. The high school principal is probably the closest (Edison; Suburban, Low Poverty)." After the principal, in most school structures athletic directors reported to the superintendent. Particularly, Evan (Rural, Low Poverty) noted:

> "Superintendent…. I feel that he really sees the value in athletics and he has been a great supporter of mine. He's really been positive saying, knowing that this is important, this is important to our community, this [athletics] is important to our kids, we need to make sure that we continue to do what we can to help."

This prioritization of internal stakeholders is consistent with the bureaucracy in schools (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) and how athletic directors described their chain of command.

The aforementioned stakeholders, student-athletes, coaches, principals, and superintendents were most frequently mentioned. Therefore, these stakeholders will be referred to as primary stakeholders as Freeman, Harrison, and Wicks (2007) describe. Primary stakeholders are those that without their participation in the athletic department it would cease to exist (Clarkson, 1995). Building relationships with these stakeholders was seen as most important for the functioning of the department. This knowledge lays the groundwork for understanding who stakeholders are in interscholastic athletics, this is depicted in the conceptual framework at the end of this chapter (see Figure 6).

Secondary Stakeholders. Even though much of what the athletic director does centers around the primary stakeholders, other stakeholders also received consideration from the athletic director. The next groups of stakeholders the athletic director identified included the parents, school board, the community, conference/league associations, and boosters. Each of these stakeholders was mentioned in a particular context, for instance, when the school board was mentioned it was often regarding approval of policies and budgets or when the booster club was mentioned it was often about fundraising and resources

Parents. Parents, although not central to athletic directors, were often mentioned as a stakeholder group that was often 'vocal' about the decisions they make. Parents were invested in the athletic department because of their children's involvement as athletes. Chris (Rural, Low-Mid Poverty) described, "I mean most parents are happy when their kids are happy," alluding to the importance of maintaining the quality of the experience for the students can in turn manage the relationship with the parents. Similarly, he stated that "If parents are happy and they feel like

they're part of a plan and they just kind of go along." Even so, most athletic directors could reference parents that were considered 'demanding' in what they expect of their child's sport experience. Todd (Urban, Low-Mid Poverty) describes his relationship with parents as "I fight parents every single day; every single day there is somebody," this quotation is in reference to hiring and keeping what parents deem as 'great' coaches on staff. Nonetheless, many athletic directors were very appreciative of the support that parents provided them and their athletic department.

As a stakeholder group, parents were often essential to volunteering at various events in order to make up for budget shortfalls in the athletic department. At events, parents were called on to work various aspects of game day from taking tickets, to transporting athletes to and from competitions, to providing meals for teams before games. Although athletic directors often called on parents to help make the athletic department function, they wanted to maintain the status that they were in charge of athletics and that parents can have a very positive impact on the athletic department if utilized and managed in the right way. Gene (Urban, Low-Mid Poverty) and Mike (Urban; Mid-High Poverty) respectively said similar things regarding this relationship "We want our parents to be involved, but just remember we're in charge and there's a big difference" and "I'm really aware of dealing with the parents. I do not have that much guff from parents because they know [in the end I make the decisions]." Therefore the dependence within the relationship of parents and athletic directors was reciprocal; athletic directors rely on parents for various forms of resources and parents put the safety and well-being of their children in the hands of the athletic director.

Word frequency analysis was conducted regarding parents, with an effort to understand whether athletic directors in certain types of communities may have more parental issues than

those in other communities. There was no significant difference amongst interview participants and urbanicity (Rural, 18.5 mentions/participant; Suburban, 15.4 mentions/participant; Urban, 16.3 mentions/participant). When analyzing word frequency amongst socioeconomic statuses, there seemed to be more discussion surrounding parents of low-mid level poverty schools and mid-high level poverty schools (High poverty 13 mentions/participant; Mid-high poverty 20 mentions/participant; Low-mid poverty 18.8 mentions/participant; Low poverty 14.7 mentions/participant). This finding at low-mid level and mid-high level poverty schools may contribute to the concept of parents pushing athletics as a leveraging tool for students to further advance themselves and their future by engaging in status building activities such as athletics (Guest & Schneider, 2003).

School Board. School boards are the elected officials that are responsible for the overall guidance of the school; therefore their stake in athletics is in broad sweeping interest of the students' well-being and success. The support for athletics varied for many reasons. Athletic directors had various levels of connection with the school board. Part of the degree of variance was due to the role that elections play in the rotation of board membership. Bart, from a rural, high-poverty district, points this out by saying,

> I think that [support] varies quite a little bit from year to year or every few years to every few years depending on who you have in there. I would say in my time, they have been pretty involved. You know some more than others but I think overall, I think, they have been -- I think they're pretty supportive or at least involved in different things.

On the other hand some mentioned their ability to represent the department and what is going on at school board meetings:

> Our board has a portion of every board meeting where they have an athletic update.... If there's ever an issue they're not afraid to make that call, any time we hire a coach we have in our policy that one of them [school board members] are in the process as well. So we've always got a board member present. (Collin; Suburban, Low Poverty)

This tight, communicative relationship between the athletic director and the school board was not commonplace, some athletic directors reflected on having limited contact with the school board and having a disjointed relationship. Miles (Rural, Low Poverty) describes the role that the board plays in policy making at his school. "That's funny that you ask because board policy kind of dictates everything that we do." Therefore, the relationship between the board and the athletic director varied greatly, in particular when there was a transition of board members as their elected position rotated. Even so, the power and influence that the school board had on the direction of the school district impacted the functioning of the athletic department, and therefore the role of the athletic director. For example, if district budgets are tight, the athletic department might see cuts in their funding or having parents of student-athletes on the board may impact the emphasis and interest that the school board has in athletics. In the end a school board that supported and believed in athletics made the role of athletic director easier as well as the stakeholder management of board members. "Our school board, it is a very athletic oriented town so success of the athletic teams is very important to everyone," (Chris; Rural, Low-Mid Poverty).

Community. Another external group that was referred to as important to the success of an athletic director was the community. Communities have been found to influence the relationship between sport participation and social status (Coleman, 1961), therefore impacting the role that athletics has in the school. Community for this study referred to people and organizations that are situated within the school district; this includes the residents and the other businesses and organizations within the geographic area of the school. Therefore, the community is a reflection of the school and the school is a reflection of the community making their stake in the success of the school of upmost importance. For example Emmet (Rural, Low

Poverty) commented about how athletics and the school fit into the community, "Athletics is important in our community, but yet it's like all public high schools it has to fit into the grand scheme of the structure."

Athletic directors often talked about how the support of the community from business support with sponsorships and donations, to members of the community coming out and supporting what the school is doing. For example, by the community attending athletic events and fundraisers they were seen as supportive and essential for success of the department. As an example Collin (Rural, Mid-High Poverty) described the community's generosity without stressing them too much, "The community is so generous, we get so much when it comes time to fundraise and stuff like that and if kids are trying to raise money and they go to the businesses we try not to pinch them any harder than they already have been." These characteristics blend to make the relationship with the community unique and supportive as Emmett (Rural, Low Poverty) described:

> I just think that the school and athletics become the center of the community a little bit. Friday night it feels like it shuts down the town and people come to the games and you know I think when community members know these kids growing up and their families then they're more likely to come to games and feel a part of it.

The community was also essential to the school and the athletic department when it comes to passing bonds and millages. With the popular vote of the community, schools are able to pass bonds and millages which provide resources for schools to make facility improvements. These funds are requested above and beyond what the state funding of Proposal A brings to the school. The money from Proposal A goes directly toward instructional costs, whereas bonds and millages enable schools to make large and small facility upgrades to technology and classroom improvements. Lou (Urban, Low Poverty) recounted the resources that the community gives to

the schools, “We have the community here that's demonstrated that if they believe in something, they'll get behind it with those things both with their time and their resources and it's all good because it supports our kids. That's what it’s about.” These bonds and millages can impact the facility improvements for the athletic department by funding new fields and stadium to improving playing surfaces and locker rooms. Therefore, the community shows their support for what the athletic department does through voting to approve bonds and millages as well as attending sporting events. In 2014, communities across the state of Michigan passed 73% of bonds that were on the ballot (Michigan Department of Treasury, 2014).

> I also think this community has those expectations and it’s willing to support. There has not been a bond or a millage here in the school district that hasn't passed in a long time. It goes back to that if the school district is asking for something and we've shown that we've been good stewards of their money that they support it. (Coby; Suburban, Low Poverty)

With that being said, athletic directors were often aware of asking for too much from the community when it comes to donations and resources. Collin (Rural, Mid-High Poverty) made a comment that they try not to “pinch them any harder than they already have been,” or “I just don’t want to stress the community, I don’t want them to think that all we ever do is ask for money,” (Evan; Rural, Low Poverty). Athletic directors showed conscientiousness toward the demands that the athletic department and the school puts on the community.

A word frequency analysis was done to understand if athletic directors in certain types of communities mentioned the word ‘community’ more than in other settings. When comparing athletic directors from the four socioeconomic statuses, there was no difference. When comparing urbanicity with word frequency of ‘community’ there were differences. Athletic directors from rural locations mentioned ‘community’ much more frequently; on average amongst all rural interview participants ‘community’ was mentioned 10.2 times. Whereas,

athletic directors from suburban schools mentioned 'community' 6 times on average and those from urban schools mentioned the 'community' 4.6 times. This may speak to the central role of athletics in small towns where on football Fridays everything closes down and centers on the game.

Booster Clubs. Another stakeholder to the athletic director is the booster club. As discussed earlier, booster clubs are nonprofit organizations typically serving as an external fundraising organization to athletic departments. Booster club members are often of parents and community members. Like the variation in school level bureaucracy, athletic booster clubs can also have structural variations. At some schools, sport programs (individual sports, i.e. football, volleyball, cross-country) have their own booster clubs; other schools only have a school-wide athletic booster club that serves all sport programs; still some schools layer both program-level booster clubs and school-wide booster clubs. Even still, some schools do not have any type of booster club. Tylor (Suburban, Low Poverty) described the structure at his school, "We have different booster clubs for basically every sport team. Every sport team has their own club, they can fundraise on their own, and they can pretty much spend that money how they choose unless it affects district facilities." No matter what the structure was of the booster club, they helped purchase various items from equipment that the department's budget can no longer support to smaller facility changes.

> We fortunately have a great booster club. They've been around for 20 or 30 years. They [booster club members] don't have any kids anymore in the school but they still raise money for athletics. And we're not a very rich district so our teams do a little fundraising for things. You know not necessarily uniforms but little extras: t-shirts, shorts, sweatshirts, and things like that. My booster club helps me with the entry fees for athletic events. The booster club gives me $4,000 a season fall, winter, and spring to help offset that cost. (Sheldon; Urban Mid-High Poverty)

Booster clubs have been utilized for basic maintenance as well, things that are becoming harder for the district to financially keep up with, "We have a very active sports booster group that does a lot to raise funds to refurbish things and fix things up. They do some things to kind of encourage our athletic programs" (Chris; Rural, Low-Mid Poverty). Athletic directors, who have the privilege of a booster club, appreciated the effort and resources that the organization had on the delivery of interscholastic sport.

Governing Organizations. Lastly, the least discussed external, secondary stakeholder are the league, or conference level governing bodies, and the MHSAA, the state-level governing body. These stakeholders were mentioned by athletic directors in regards to league wide changes and initiatives, among other logistical meetings to discuss routine game management within the league. Athletic directors referred to variations in membership within their leagues over time and the fact that policy changes were made with the changes in membership:

> Our league has changed dramatically over time: added schools. You know schools have gotten smaller and dropped out. I've been around a long time in our league so from that standpoint -- You know some league policies have changed that we've been involved in. (Sheldon; Urban, Mid-High Poverty)

Athletic directors also discussed how their school level decisions had the ability to impact the league and their relationships with other schools within their league and within the state. Therefore, governing bodies had the ability to impact the decision-making of the athletic director and can be considered an external, secondary stakeholder.

> The other thing that a lot of people don't recognize when you're decision-making is how your decisions impact the rest of the league. So you have a commitment to the other eleven league schools. If we schedule a game and it's in conflict with a band concert, but if it's a league game I'm not touching it because I made a commitment to those other schools. We made a commitment to a certain structure that we've agreed upon. Decision-making within the league is very important too, not just within your own school. (Emmett; Rural, Low Poverty)

Secondary stakeholders, such as the parents, school board, the community, boosters, and governing bodies, found purposeful relationships with the athletic director. These purposeful relationships were centered on serving the student-athletes. These stakeholders were engaged in decision-making when it was most relevant, necessary, and beneficial for both parties, this is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Secondary stakeholders are defined as being indirectly affected by decisions made in the athletic department (Freeman et al., 2007). Therefore, as the quotations have demonstrated, they are relationships the athletic director must manage for athletic department success.

Questionnaire. The past section served the purpose of identifying stakeholders, the prioritization, and some of the relationship characteristics according to the athletic director from the qualitative findings. Identified stakeholders include student-athletes, coaches, principals, superintendents, parents, school board, community, booster clubs, and governing bodies, the priority of the relationships was based on the frequency of interaction. In addition to asking questionnaire respondents to prioritize stakeholders, respondents were asked about stakeholder relationship characteristics. The prioritization of stakeholders variable was constructed by averaging the rank score that athletic directors assigned to each stakeholder group. The stakeholder relationship characteristics variable was constructed by combining the responses from relationship characteristic (power, urgency, and legitimacy) questions and averaging the scores assigned by athletic directors.

Findings from the questionnaire demonstrate that those that the athletic director manages (student-athletes and coaches) and who they are managed by (principals and superintendents) are the most important to them; these stakeholders have the most interaction with the athletic director and were all located within the organization. The questionnaire confirmed the findings

in the interviews, when asked to rank whose interests and priorities they most accounted for, primary stakeholders to the athletic director were student-athletes, coaches, and their principal or superintendent. Just as in the qualitative findings, the quantitative portion enforced the findings in the portrayal of the stakeholder's importance to athletic directors. This is represented in the conceptual framework at the end of the chapter, reworking the Freeman, Harrison and Wicks (2007) portrayal of corporate stakeholders to those of interscholastic athletics (See Figure 6). Table 4 summarizes the findings of the prioritization of stakeholders from the questionnaire.

Table 4

Stakeholder Prioritization

Rank	Group	Mean	Median
1	Student-athletes	1.221	1
2	Coaches	2.608	2
3	Principals/Superintendents	3.887	3
4	Parents	4.578	5
5	School Board	5.431	6
6	Community	5.544	6
7	Governing Associations	5.73	6
8	Boosters	7.025	7

*Questionnaire question: When tending to decisions, you make in the athletic department, whose interests and priorities do you account for most? Rank #1 as the most important, #9 the least, use NA if not applicable.

Next, questions were asked regarding characteristics of athletic directors' relationship with each stakeholder. The answers to Likert scaled questions were combined and collapsed into the three salience characteristics defined by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) as power, urgency, and legitimacy. Average scores were then ranked to show which stakeholder relationship contained the highest level of power, urgency, and legitimacy. Mitchell and colleagues (1997) combined these three characteristics in different ways to label stakeholders as definitive, demanding, dangerous, dominant, dormant, discretionary, and dependent. Athletic directors described their relationship with their principal and superintendent has having high power, high

legitimacy, and high urgency. Therefore, the principal and superintendent were definitive stakeholders by scoring high on all three salience characteristics. The next stakeholder with high rankings in salience categories were coaches. The relationship with coaches was said to have high levels of urgency and high levels of legitimacy classifying them as a dependent stakeholder. The school board on the other hand with its salience rankings would be considered a dominant stakeholder. The salience findings are summarized in Table 5. These are not unexpected findings when compared to the findings from the interviews; they confirmed the findings of the interviews. The unusual finding was that student-athletes are the highest priority to athletic directors but do not rank the highest on any salience characteristic. These findings begin to lay the groundwork for understanding the stakeholder management techniques utilized by athletic directors, in particular when involving particular stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Table 5

Stakeholder Relationship Characteristics

Stakeholder Characteristics- Mean Score					
Legitimacy	**Mean Score**	**Urgency**	**Mean Score**	**Power**	**Mean Score**
Principal/Superintendent	5.604	Principal/Superintendent	6.129	Principal/Superintendent	5.549
Coaches	5.495	Coaches	5.898	School Board	4.627
School Board	4.764	Student-Athletes	5.325	Coaches	4.466
Student-Athletes	4.422	School Board	4.675	Booster	3.517
Boosters	3.743	Boosters	4.071	Community	2.762
Parents	3.602	Community	4.011	Parents	2.555
Community	3.47	Parents	3.913	Student-Athletes	NA

*Question 2: The principal/superintendent has power over athletic department decisions. The principal/superintendent is frequently involved in athletic department decisions. The principal/superintendent controls critical resources for the athletic department. Etc.

Decisions

Besides understanding which stakeholders to consider and why, there were multiple emergent themes that were part of the decision-making process surrounding stakeholder management that athletic directors considered. Below I discuss decisions that athletic directors

make and their importance. The type of decision led to different decision processes which are explained in more detail in the following section. Two common themes to the decision process emerged after interviews were conducted: committees engaging stakeholders and solo decision-makers. For many athletic directors, the basis for using one process over the other was based on the importance of the decision; therefore this section began with describing the level of importance of the decision. Results from qualitative and quantitative analysis are presented within each section.

Decisions athletic directors make. In order to more fully understand the role of athletic director, one of the first questions asked in the interview was what decisions they get to make in their role (see Appendix A for a full interview guide). Their responses included minute details of game day management like setting up the sideline chairs for the team benches at home games to larger facility improvements and policy changes. The decisions that are within the autonomy of the athletic director and their responsibilities include everything from making sure there are teams to play at events, to the human resource management of the various coaches and officials they hire. Below are some representative quotations that describe the various types of decisions athletic directors make highlighting scheduling, purchasing, budgeting, and the management of athletes to name a few. Josiah (Low-Mid Poverty) begins by describing, "I am responsible for all facets of scheduling officials, transportation, day-to-day operations of the athletic department...And my job is then to facilitate, work with your schedule, your transportation, uniform issues, and disciplinary issues." Below are two other representative quotations of the responsibilities of athletic director.

> And so that would include as far as responsibilities everything from contracts, assigning officials, getting game workers, facilities, transportation, equipment, purchasing of all the equipment, maintaining the athletic budget, dealing with parent concerns, dealing with player safety, training of all of the coaching staff, parent meetings in terms of rules,

> checking rules violations. I just got off the phone with the MHSAA working on eligibility issues whether it be through school eligibility or state eligibility. (Bart; Rural, High Poverty)

> Game management, hiring, discipline of student-athletes, hiring of coaches, firing of coaches, anything to do with purchase of equipment. We're kind of in our own little world here. Pretty much everything I do is my decision with the input of our coaches and my principal. (Todd; Urban, Low-Mid Poverty)

One must take note of changes in decision-making attributed to declines in paid help within the athletic department. Some athletic directors had the luxury of having an assistant and were grateful for their help, "All the ADs that you talk to, I guarantee their assistant or secretary is really the most important thing in their job," said Mike (Urban, Mid-High Poverty). Others who were not so lucky and have had to absorb those responsibilities that were once given to their assistants, as Collin (Rural, Mid-High Poverty) described, "I don't have my administrative assistant, when I first got here it [administrative assistant] was a full-time job." Bert (Suburban, Mid-High Poverty) recounted this change in decisions and roles as a transition, "They're expecting you to do more and in the State of Michigan they're paying you less because of the things that have occurred with salary, retirement, etcetera. It's become a much more difficult position. It's a lot of transition." Therefore, athletic directors have absorbed more minor decisions that they once passed along to an assistant, increasing the number of decisions they make and increasing the number of responsibilities, and the possibility of engaging in various stakeholders to make up for such personnel shortfalls. One way athletic directors coped with managing the decisions they make was to prioritize them. The next section highlights how athletic directors framed how important a decision was to them; this was a factor in the decision process utilized that is described later.

Importance of decisions. When making decisions, there are decisions that were more important and those that had less weight according to athletic directors. Athletic directors have a role to identify and diagnose decisions for the school then in turn create meaningful action around those decisions (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). The prioritization of decisions allowed athletic directors to portray an image that is congruent with what stakeholders expect (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1992). Prioritizing decisions was important to athletic directors because this impacted the decision process utilized.

During the interviews, athletic directors were asked what types of decisions they were authorized to make. The decisions which were most important to them was gleaned from what decisions they talked about most frequently, with more depth, and more concern than compared to other decisions that received less of their attention. Major decisions were often described as those involving a more distinct organizational process including incorporating policies and procedures set forth within the structure of the school district. Minor decisions on the other hand were those characterized with a taken-for-granted nature, a daily occurrence, or as routine. One way decisions were thought to have more importance was because of athletic directors' reflection and respect for the organizational hierarchy during the process (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) such as hiring coaches that engaged specific human resource procedures, whereas minor decisions were dismissed as routine such as setting sport schedules. The following representative quotations highlight the organizational hierarchical nature or "pecking order" to the decisions that are perceived as more important, "The progression here is any major decision I have to go up the food chain to get it OK'd," Bert (Suburban, Mid-High Poverty) voiced or as Alex (Suburban, Low-Mid) said "If it is a big decision, I run it by the principal or our

administrative team. What do you think about doing this? They'll give me their input and I'll make a decision."

Major Decisions. More important decisions were identified in the interviews by the frequency with which they were discussed; the three most important decisions for athletic directors center on the hiring of coaches, policy changes, and the budget. Hiring quality coaches to serve the department, program, and the student-athletes was considered an important decision. As Lou (Urban, Low Poverty) explained, "The most important decisions that I make without a question is which coaches we hire." This level of decision importance was referred to as being 'politically charged' (Camron; Rural, High Poverty) or as being 'hard' to find quality coaches as Barry (Suburban, Low-Mid Poverty) depicted. Other important decisions centered on policy changes within or for the department. One example was changing academic eligibility standards for student-athletes, Evan (Rural, Low Poverty) recounted having 'lots of discussion about eligibility' when deliberating the possibility of changing athletic eligibility standards in his school. Lastly, budgetary decisions weighed heavily for athletic directors, typically they centered on continuing to provide the same opportunities for students with less resources. As Emmett (Rural, Low Poverty) reported, "I have to make the decision how we devise those budgets. So you have to keep in mind, need, Title IX, all those kinds of things." Or as Rueben (Urban, High Poverty) described in his higher poverty school, "I struggle with that [the budget] because it is just not enough to go around. So sometimes, one of your needs might go unmet." Similarly as Mike (Urban, Mid-High Poverty) articulated budgetary decisions as the toughest, "When it comes to resources but that's probably the toughest -- finding ways to fund programs without having the money for it." Therefore, these decisions need more attention and therefore take up more of their time (Ocasio, 1997; 2011)

Word frequency analysis was conducted amongst these three major decisions, hiring, policy, and budgets to search for patterns amongst school-level characteristics. 'Policy' was mentioned relatively equally across socioeconomic status of athletic directors (High poverty 3; Mid-high 3; Low-Mid 3; Low 5) and across urbanicity with rural scoring slightly higher than urban and suburban. This difference may be solely contributed to timing rather than stating that rural schools are making more policy changes (Urban 3; Suburban 3; Rural 8). 'Hiring' was fairly evenly distributed amongst school characteristics with low-mid poverty schools and urban schools mentioning 'hiring' more frequently than other schools ([High poverty 13; Mid-high 8; Low-mid 20; Low 8]]Urban 24; Suburban 10; Rural 15]). 'Budget, money, and resources' were searched amongst socioeconomic status of schools due to the connection to resources. An interesting finding is that those schools with a higher socioeconomic status mentioned those three resource words more frequently than those with fewer resources. Low poverty school athletic directors mentioned those words 25.5 times per participant, whereas high poverty school athletic directors mentioned them only 15.5 times per participant (Low-Mid Poverty 25.3 times per participant, Mid-High Poverty 16.1 times per participant). This finding is interesting because it seems as though those athletic directors with fewer resources discuss it less frequently, and one would think that those with more resources would talk about it less frequently since it would not be a big concern for them.

Table 6

Major Decisions and Urbanicity

Word Freqency per Participant and **Urbanicity**			
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Budgetary Decisions	27	7	15
Hiring Decisions	24	10	15
Policy Decisions	3	3	8

Table 7

Major Decisions and Socioeconomic Status

Word Freqency per Participant and **SES**				
	Low Poverty	Low-Mid	Mid-High	High Poverty
Budgetary Decisions	25.5	25.3	16.1	15.5
Hiring Decisions	8	20	8	13
Policy Decisions	5	3	3	3

Minor Decisions. On the other hand, decisions that were perceived as more routine and requiring less attention of the athletic director were labeled as minor decisions. Minor decisions could be considered game day logistics from setting the schedules, officials, venues, to volunteers. Minor decisions were talked about more as 'busy work' versus needing a strategic mindset and eye for the future, for example Gene (Urban, Low-Mid Poverty) described them as "day-in and day-out stuff." Chris (Rural, Low-Mid Poverty) said his role in game day management, "Just trouble-shooting and just kind of minute by minute stuff at any game."

In the end, some decisions athletic directors make may be minor and taken for granted whereas others have more far reaching implications. Either way, Rueben (Urban, High Poverty) described his role in the process as, "Every decision in regards to athletics has to come through or be signed off by you." Mike (Urban, Mid-High Poverty) recounted the questions that he balances in his head when making decisions:

> I think when you say decision-making the decision-making comes down to: What are you doing as an athletic director? What will you do to make sure the safety -- the component of athletics with the virtues of academics, life lessons and so on how do you crunch numbers to make it work? How do you give everybody a little bit of something so everybody gets a little bit of resources? As far as like athletic directors that are really good, they find ways to make things happen without having the resources to do so.

Questionnaire. Questionnaire participants were asked questions based on the comments of interview participants regarding the importance of the decisions they make. The questionnaire asked respondents to rate on a Likert scale if a decision was perceived as a major decision to them. This question combined the decision autonomy described in the interviews along with an understanding in the importance of these decisions. This variable was constructed by taking the average response of each athletic director with regards to how important they perceive the decision via Likert scale answers. When looking at the mean rankings of decisions made by athletic directors, hiring was considered to be a major decision ($\bar{x}$= 6.424), this mean ranked higher than any other decision. Hiring was considered the most important decision from the questionnaire confirmed the responses from the interviews, where athletic directors discussed how bringing in the right coaches was an essential component for success within the department, but also the success of the sport programs on and off the field. Based on the item means, budgeting ($\bar{x}$=6.282), changing policies ($\bar{x}$=6.136), facility improvements ($\bar{x}$=6.11), and student discipline ($\bar{x}$=6.040) in descending order were ranked the next important. This also coincided with what interview respondents said regarding what decisions they get to make and what decisions take up the majority of their time. When it comes to decisions regarding student discipline, this task would be more prevalent if the athletic director also had the role of assistant principal as student discipline was part of the assistant principal responsibilities. This combination role was often seen in interviewees and is becoming a more prominent trend in school structures. The remaining decisions to describe were essential to the role of athletic director but were often more routine and minor when compared to strategic decisions like hiring, policy making, and budgeting. These decisions in ranked mean order were personnel evaluation ($\bar{x}$=5.875), game management ($\bar{x}$=5.644), improving departmental efficiencies ($\bar{x}$=5.571), and

scheduling of games and officials ($\bar{x}$=5.540). Refer to Table 8 for a full list of the decisions in their rank of importance according to athletic directors. In conclusion, the questionnaire confirmed the findings of the interviews with decisions about hiring, budgeting, and changing policies to be major decisions. The importance of a decision was a variable in the decision process utilized.

Table 8

Decision Importance

Decision	Mean	S.D.
Hiring	6.424	0.704
Budgeting	6.282	0.7066
Changing Policies	6.136	0.8351
Facility Improvements	6.11	0.8202
Student Discipline	6.04	0.8466
Personnel Evaluation	5.875	0.9538
Game Management	5.644	1.051
Departmental Efficiencies	5.571	0.9516
Scheduling Events	5.54	1.105

Decision Processes

Athletic directors used various approaches to manage stakeholders; part of this process was based on the importance of the decision as well as the stakeholder relationship. An element of the decision process for athletic directors was their approach to coping with the demands of various stakeholders. Todd (Urban, Low-Mid Poverty) described the various stakeholders as tentacles, "There are just so many tentacles coming at you. You have all these different people that want stuff….There are just so many things that people need from us." Edison (Suburban, Low Poverty) also reflected on balancing these demands, "I think they're [athletic directors] always going to make sure before they make that decision, how is this going to affect our athletic

program, how is this going to affect our customers, both internally and externally." These perceptions of stakeholder needs were part of the choice in the decision process utilized. Two emergent decision-making processes that athletic directors engaged were the utilization of committees and making decisions alone. This section will present the process of engaging a committee of stakeholders followed by making decisions alone, beginning with qualitative findings then through quantitative findings.

Committees. One common decision process that athletic directors engaged in was to convene committees consisting of stakeholders as a means to managing those relationships. Two-thirds of interview participants referenced using committees in some capacity or another in their decision-making. In particular this tactic was mentioned when it came to making more important decisions or more politically driven decisions, especially with the hiring of a head coach or with changing policies that impact student-athletes. With the changing of a head coach, athletic directors often felt pressure from stakeholders to make the 'right' decision; typically that pressure meant to bring more success to the team in the form of wins. Athletic directors often spearheaded policy changes with regards to changing eligibility standards, fee structures, social media standards, fundraising, and the code of conduct for student-athletes to name a few. Considering these important, politically charged decisions, athletic directors turned toward engaging stakeholders within the decision process. The following section describes the process of engaging a committee, a description of who would be on that committee, and athletic directors' justification for utilizing this stakeholder management technique.

The process of convening a committee and what the committee was responsible for was characterized by athletic directors. It was described as "I have to follow basic human resources rules—form a committee and have a certain amount of people on it and that sort of thing," (Rick;

Urban, Mid-High Poverty). Edison (Suburban, Low Poverty) also recounted utilizing a committee in a similar fashion, "Hiring a varsity coach is a little bit bigger deal—more often than not we use the committee approach….use the guidance of our human resource office." After a committee is convened, the next step was expressed like Josiah's experience (Suburban, Low-Mid Poverty), "We have an interview process, [the committee] makes a selection and a recommendation, and then my boss makes the recommendation to the board who we hire as the coach." Judd (Rural, Low-Mid Poverty) outlined how the committee kept track of applicants by stating they "Had a form that we graded everybody on and made comments on." Many athletic directors said that the committee often came to a consensus, but if there ever was a divide amongst committee members then the principal and the athletic director would make the decision.

In order to understand the reasoning behind convening a committee, it is important to understand who was represented on the committee. More often than not the primary stakeholders that were important to the athletic director were mentioned to have roles on the committee. Internally, athletic directors mentioned involving teachers, principals, assistant principals, and other key administrators that may be influenced by the decision made. Athletic directors often mentioned asking other head coaches to sit in on major decisions as well as vested parents involved in the program. Vested parents would be those who have been invested with the program deeply, there may be multiple children who have played the sport, they may have once been a coach, or they may volunteer consistently to be involved with the program day in and day out. One highly prioritized stakeholder that participated less frequently on committees was the student-athlete, which is understandable given the age and maturity level of student-athletes might not adapt well with the decision-making process. One athletic director did mention having

an alumni of the program be involved in the hiring of the new coach if the logistics worked out because the alumni would have a unique perspective on the needs and culture of the program which would help the selection committee. The size of the committee varied based on the decision. Hiring committees often consisted of the athletic director, a parent, another administrator, and another varsity coach. Policy changing committees often incorporated more stakeholders because it affected more stakeholders; such as teachers, students, board members and those stakeholders included in the hiring process. Bart (Rural, High Poverty) begins this sentiment by saying, "So you get parents. You get coaches. You get board members. You know those types of people -- students or whatever. You try to get them onboard and figure out what do you deem important." His thoughts are also shared by Emmett and Collin below,

> You want to get the key stakeholders, you can have a couple coaches, a parent involved, kind of a key parent that would be involved in that process, our director of operations, oversees it. Our principal is a pretty hands-on guy in terms of wanting to know what's going on with athletics, so that's usually the group. (Emmett; Rural, Low Poverty)

> I usually have 3 people involved in the hiring process. Usually another varsity coach, we try to bring in that as well. That way we have a coaching aspect, we have an administrative aspect and we have a board aspect all combined. We have had for some of the bigger positions if we've got a number of candidates come in we may throw a 4th person in there. Our superintendent will come in and do that as well. (Collin; Rural, Mid-High Poverty)

Athletic directors cited many reasons why they chose those stakeholders or how this could in turn help the impact and acceptance of the decision made. Reasons were related to the human resource process, transparency, and communication. Some schools had established human resource processes that mandated the use of committees and who should be on those committees as described previously. Athletic directors cited transparency as a key to the success of decision-making and that engaging stakeholders demonstrated just that, "I will always reach out to parents…just to get their input. Let them sit in front of candidates, we're very transparent

with everything we do," (Lou; Urban, Low Poverty). On the other hand, Bart (Rural, High Poverty) described, "Communication is going to be the key. Bring the stakeholders in and try to develop a plan." The reason for the emphasis on communication was said to be to make sure that stakeholders were aware of what was going on within the athletic department and with an effort to, "Try to bridge that gap between school and athletics," (Lou; Urban, Low Poverty). Communication was the key to success of this stakeholder engagement strategy for athletic directors. For example, "It [using committees] gives a lot more people input. And they [committee members] can go out and say, "Hey, this is the best candidate we had," (Rick; Urban Mid-High Poverty) or as Todd (Urban, Low-Mid Poverty) said, "They have some vested interest in the position. They've seen who we've had and hopefully they can go out and be a tool for us to spread the word that we picked the right guy."

The concept of engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process was well thought out by athletic directors. One athletic director stated that "It is strategic in my way [to utilize committees]" (Rick; Urban Mid-High Poverty). A common theme amongst those who convened committees was for a sense of shared ownership of the decision made by all of those involved in the decision. Shared-ownership in the committee decision-making process can be understood by stating "There is power in numbers" (Todd; Urban, Low-Mid Poverty) and that numbers have the ability to impact the decision as well as the dissemination of the decision process and the decision afterwards. Edison (Suburban, Low Poverty) describes his experience as, "Shared ownership of decisions is important because the buy-in makes the policy or the decision more effective." The power in numbers was said to make the decision 'more effective' and a disbursement of the 'blame' of the decision to the committee rather than the individual administrators.

In the end, the purpose driving the utilization of committees by athletic directors with stakeholder engagement was a desire to do everything possible for the betterment of the student-athletes. Stakeholders shared a common purpose to their involvement which was to enhance the student-athlete experience. Athletic directors saw stakeholder engagement through representation on committees as a tool in the decision-making process and a stakeholder management tactic. Coby (Suburban, Low Poverty) described the evolution of this tactic and why it is important:

> So the only other way we can do that is to have people take on more responsibilities and so there's no reason in my mind to fight is, embrace it and work together, do things collaboratively, work together and still provide what we can for our kids.

Stakeholder engagement within the decision-making process was found to be beneficial for the decision at hand as well as bringing together all stakeholders on doing what was best for the student-athletes.

Interview participants who used committees to help make more important decisions tended to mention more stakeholder groups in their interviews. Word frequency analysis was done and then searched for mention of stakeholder names; on average participants who used committees mentioned at least one more stakeholder group than those who did not use committees in decision-making.

Interview participants who chose to use committees had an average position tenure of 6.86 years. The majority of these people came from large schools (Class A, 61%; see Table 8). Although no other school-level characteristic was prominent, there was a relatively even distribution of urbanicity (Urban=33%, Suburban=335, Rural=33%; see Table 9), and relatively even distribution amongst poverty level (Low-poverty=27.7%, Low-Mid=33.3%, Mid-High=22.2%, High Poverty=16.6%; see Table 10). Overall, interview participants who engaged

in utilizing committees were found in all types of schools, no one type of school was more prevalent than others.

Figure 3

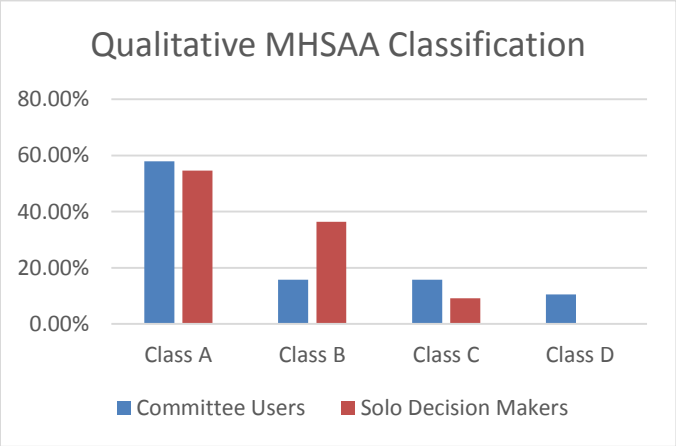


Figure 4

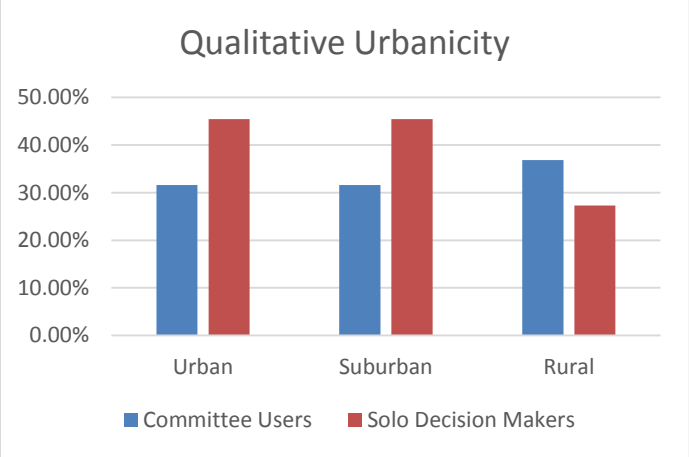
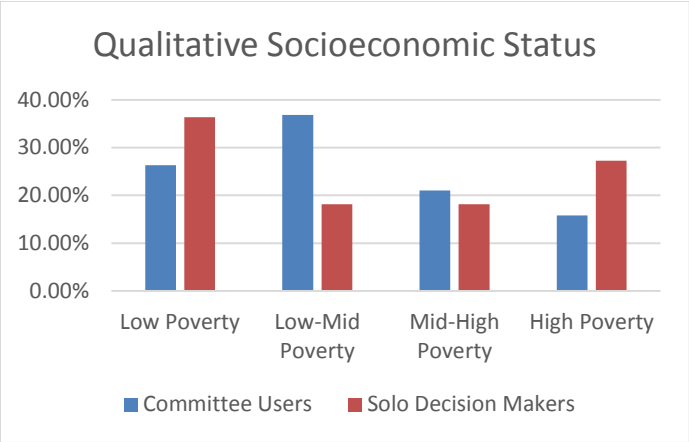


Figure 5



Questionnaire. Within the questionnaire, questions were asked regarding the use of committees with major and or minor decisions. Of those who did not use a committee for minor decisions, 41.5% were not inclined to use a committee with a major decision either. Therefore, some athletic directors do not engage in utilizing committees, no matter what the decision was, more on this in the following section. Although among those who said they would not use a committee for minor decision, 49.2% were more likely to use a committee if it were a major decision. This finding shows that there are athletic directors who find that using a committee is a key decision-making strategy and stakeholder management technique when making important decisions.

Analysis was done to see if certain individuals or athletic directors at certain types of schools were making major decisions using committees. Logistic regression analysis was performed to understand if various school level and individual level variables were predictive in athletic directors using committees to make major decisions. No statistically significant association was found between individual characteristics gender (p=.725), tenure (p=.140), and race (p=.236) with utilizing committees for major decisions. School level factors such as

MHSAA classification (Class B *p*=.533; Class C *p*=.137; Class D *p*= .439), urbanicity (City *p*=.223; Suburb *p*=.116; Town *p*=.483), or poverty level (Middle poverty *p*=.445; High poverty *p*=783) were not associated with athletic directors who use committees in decision-making. These findings show that these individual level characteristics and school-level characteristics are not leading to committee use among athletic directors (see Logistic Regression Table 9).

Table 9

Logistic Regression Table

	Major Decision Making by Committee				Major Decision-Making Alone			
		95% CI				95% CI		
	AOR	Lower	Upper	Sig.	AOR	Lower	Upper	Sig.
Support	0.417	0.085	2.043	0.281	0.485	0.08	2.932	0.431
Female	1.255	0.354	4.443	0.725	0.96	0.29	3.182	0.947
Non-white	3.976	0.405	38.994	0.236	5.767	0.762	43.628	0.09
AD Tenure	1.036	0.988	1.086	0.14	1.012	0.967	1.059	0.605
MHSAA Class B	1.385	0.497	3.854	0.533	1.184	0.44	3.186	0.739
MHSAA Class C	0.393	0.115	1.347	0.137	1.172	0.352	3.899	0.796
MHSAA Class D	0.594	0.159	2.221	0.439	1164	0.332	4.073	0.812
Participation Rate	0.245	0.034	1.767	0.163	1.291	0.195	8.567	0.791
City	0.362	0.071	1.852	0.223	0.435	0.081	2.328	0.331
Suburban	0.432	0.152	1.229	0.116	2.254	0.819	6.206	0.116
Town	0.661	0.207	2.107	0.483	1.312	0.417	4.129	0.642
Middle Level Poverty	0.683	0.256	1.819	0.445	1.468	0.567	3.8	0.429
High Level Poverty	1.223	0.291	5.14	0.783	0.481	0.114	2.034	0.32
Majority White Student Population	1.125	0.364	3.482	0.873	1.159	0.352	3.818	0.808

Solo decision-makers. Even though many athletic directors discussed their stakeholder management techniques as engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process, some athletic directors protected their role more closely and made decisions on their own all of the time. All athletic directors stated how they made decisions on their own when the decisions were perceived as minor and more routine. However, approximately one-third of athletic directors stated that they always made decisions on their own no matter the level of perceived importance was with the decision at hand. These athletic directors did not engage stakeholders throughout the process, although they may have asked for advice at various times, this decision-making

process will be referred to as solo decision-makers. These athletic directors who always made decisions on their own noted that they did so as a function of administration hiring to make decisions related to athletics, not to pass that responsibility along to others. Mike (Urban, Mid-High Poverty) gave an example of that opinion, "There is a reason why they hired me as athletic director. If they don't think I'm making the right choices, then get rid of me."

Just because some athletic directors chose not to use the committee approach to decision-making does not mean that they did not seek advice from stakeholders. Athletic directors would solicit advice in many ways. One of the most common ways was through their presence at athletic events. This was cited as a way to connect with the parents, the community, and the student-athletes; this appearance approach was their way of being available to stakeholders, engaging stakeholders in conversations, and understanding the program from a different level. Tylor (Suburban; Low Poverty) spoke of allowing stakeholders the opportunity to express their opinions, "I wanted to make sure that if I were in this position that I would solicit advice and that sort of thing. That's not to say that every decision is done by committee, you can't do that." When making decisions, there was a sense of coordination and leadership that was their role as Matt (Urban, High Poverty) described, "So really the big decision making falls on my shoulders, but still kind of making sure that we're all on the same page before we do anything is huge."

Athletic directors that always made decisions on their own described why they never engaged parents or other stakeholders in the hiring process. One athletic director cited that parents always have their own motives behind their involvement and their decisions. This athletic director lacked the confidence in his stakeholders to be objective and to make the best decision for all student-athletes, not just that of their own child. Therefore, they did not engage

stakeholders in the decision-making process. Mike (Urban, Mid-High Poverty) discussed that point,

> I never ever engaged parents in hiring processes...I always think they have a personal agenda -- always. I've not met a parent that has cared more about other kids than their own. I haven't. I just haven't. You know they're not going to. So I think when we say that it sounds great but a lot of times -- in my experience, parents will get involved because there is some personal gain in that. I mean personal gain whatever.

One of the reasons that the solo decision-making athletic directors cited as not adopting a committee approach was the decision of who gets put on the committee and why. Chris (Rural, Low-Mid Poverty) reflected on this struggle,

> One of the things you get into is: who do you get? How do you make that parent selection? And if I chose Mr. Smith, is Mr. Jones upset because he hasn't been picked? Sometimes you create too many problems by not picking the right person. Or getting somebody who has the voice of this group of people but this group of people over here doesn't have a voice. You run into that a little bit which is why I think I try to stay away from it [committees] as much as possible.

In the end, with making decisions alone, athletic directors recognized the importance of asking for help and the fine line of how doing things on your own can have various repercussions. For example, Todd (Urban, Low-Mid Poverty) referenced using the input of others but in the end making the decision, "I'm not an expert in most things. I try to get people who think they're experts to be involved. Now, with all due respect, I'm going to pick who I want." Josh (Suburban, Low-Mid Poverty) on the other hand described his decision process and the repercussions of it:

> There's a fine line that you walk between go ahead and doing something and getting permission to do something. I'm famous for doing it and then getting in trouble, and then saying I'm sorry, kind of, then doing it again.

When looking at interviewed athletic directors that choose to never use a committee when making a decision, they have on average 9.5 years of tenure in their position. Fifty percent

of these athletic directors come from large Class A schools (Class B=33%, Class C=16%, see Figure 3), and were from a range of schools in urbanicity (Urban=41.6%, Suburban=25%, Rural=33.3%, see Figure 4) and poverty level (Low Poverty=33.3%, Low-Mid=25%, Mid-High 16%, High= 25%, see Figure 5). Therefore, there was no significant difference amongst those who made decisions by committee and those who made decisions alone, other than there was a slightly higher tenure for those who made decisions alone.

Questionnaire. With knowing that some athletic directors preferred to retain their autonomy in decision-making, the questionnaire inquired about making major and minor decisions alone. Athletic directors who make decisions on their own all of the time accounted for 41.5% of respondents. Of the athletic directors who did not make major decisions on their own, 84.4% of them did make minor decisions on their own. This finding also supports the notion that the type of decision did have implications into the way that athletic directors made their decisions (Reynolds et al., 2007) in the fact that minor decisions were often made alone by all athletic directors versus major decisions that some athletic directors utilized forming committees.

Regression analysis was performed to see if certain individual characteristics and school level characteristics had an association with those who made major decisions on their own. Through logistic regression analysis, no association was found between these characteristics and athletic directors who choose to make major decisions on their own; gender (p=.863), race (p=.079), and tenure (p=.605) were not predictive of a relationship with solo decision makers. MHSAA classification (Class B p=.739; Class C p=.796; Class D p=.812), urbanicity (City p=.331; Suburb p=.116; Town p=.642), as well as socioeconomic measures (Middle level poverty p=.429; and High level poverty p=.320) were not predictive in athletic directors

choosing to make decisions on their own. Therefore, there may be other underlying variables that might help predict which athletic directors choose to make major decisions on their own versus convening a committee for these decisions (see Logistic Regressions Table 9 above). Underlying variables may be related toward the type of leadership that the athletic director engages in, or it could be a structural or cultural factor of the school as an organization, more discussion on this later.

There were clearly instances where athletic directors felt the need to engage stakeholders in athletic department decision-making but there were also certain athletic directors or decisions that did not warrant the use of stakeholders' direct involvement in the decision-making process. The impact of the type of decision influencing the stakeholder management technique was also found in Reynolds et al. (2006), although this study points to engagement of stakeholders or not, not decisions on how to consider stakeholders. Either way, the engagement of stakeholders in the decision-making process is a unique finding with stakeholder management.

Goals or Outcomes for Athletic Participation

Athletic directors had various goals or outcomes for student participation in athletics. Part of this may stem from the role that the identity of being involved in sports participant holds for the student-athlete. For instance, students at low socioeconomic schools that are athletes are seen as good students, whereas those of higher socioeconomic status athletics may seem as a detriment to the building of a 'good student' due to the distraction it may cause from high academic achievement and expectations (Guest & Schnieder, 2003). A key theme to athletic directors' conceptualization of their goals for athletics was based around their interpretation and understanding of various stakeholders and their impact on the athletic department. Earlier Todd

(Urban, Low-Mid Poverty) described stakeholders as 'tentacles,' here Bart (Rural, High Poverty) talked about the varying agendas that he has to balance,

> I mean that can be difficult because everybody has their own agendas. They have their own ideas of what's really important. You know so any time you get all that…you just have to try to balance it. You have to communicate. We'll try to meet with different stakeholders and stuff like that to try to see what maybe is the best way to address an issue or a problem, that's really important.

Athletic directors often discussed how at the end of the day success in sports is often measured in wins and losses. This was seen as an inevitable measure that was placed on them from many stakeholders. Chris describes this well below,

> But you know we measure it to a large extent by the numbers we're putting up on the banners and how many trophies are in the trophy case. And that is what our community looks like and that's what's important to them...And again, in any school system, the community is going to drive the priorities of the system to a certain extent. I mean you can as an athletic administrator has all the expectations you want but if parents aren't happy, and if parents feel the direction of the school system and the athletic program is in the wrong direction; you know that's a tough battle to fight.

Even though athletic directors all mentioned balancing the various agendas and stakeholders, there were differences amongst the socioeconomic status of the school and the goals for athletics. Differences were evident when comparing schools that were from low or mid-low poverty schools than those from mid-high to high level poverty schools. Those from low poverty locations tended to focus on the level of competition that the students competed at as well as the emphasis on looking toward the future of the students. This future looking trend has been studied and found that participation can impact adult outcomes such as educational attainment, occupational status, and income (Otto & Alwin, 1977). Whereas, those athletic directors in higher poverty areas focused more on the life skills that student-athletes would gain from their experience in athletics as well as focusing on graduation because graduation has been

found to be a positive association with participation in extracurricular activities (Mahoney, 2000; McNeal, 1995).

Athletic directors in low poverty schools focused on creating a department where there was an expectation of excellence and being strong competitors on the field. These athletic directors often referenced a chain reaction of different decisions and people being the tool to having success on the field, they did not attribute their success to making one key decision. Coby (Suburban, Low Poverty) described this idea of 'winning as a byproduct' concept to his management of the athletic department,

> I can tell you that my philosophy is that winning is a byproduct, it's a byproduct of doing all the right things, it's a byproduct of having quality coaches, it's a byproduct of having kids that are committed. It's a byproduct of having parents that are supportive, it's a byproduct of all these things and then you know what if you put that all together and you mix a little luck into it you can win a lot of games and we've been fortunate to do that.

Emmett (Rural, Low Poverty) on the other hand stated how striving for a high level of competition for the athletes was something that helps satisfy stakeholders due to the visible nature of athletics in the community.

> I want our kids to compete at a high level. I think that if you send your kids to school here you should expect them to have the best programs, that's one. I want them to be treated the right way, I want our coaches to coach the right way. That's a big deal to me is that we're coaching them the right way. They walk away feeling like they had a good experience. And, you know thirdly, athletics is kind of the front porch of the school district. No one comes in and sees a math class.... the tens of thousands of people that come to games, we have to represent the school the right way. If it doesn't, we don't ultimately that's a reflection on me and what we do in the athletic department.

Miles (Rural, Low-Mid Poverty) also agreed with the sentiment that winning games is something that the community takes pride in, "But ultimately it would be nice to win some games and get some recognition from the community because our community wants that, they care about, they're super prideful on being a small community." This concept of the external perception

being important was also shared by Gene (Urban, Low-Mid Poverty) who wanted to create events that everyone has a good experience, the home team and the visiting team,

> At the end of the day we want people to have a good experience, when people come here for an event from other schools one of the things...I want the people that are leaving here to say, man I wish my kid went to [school name], those guys just did everything first class, you know everything, even the little things…I want people to leave here saying I want my kid to go to [school name]. If we're doing that, we're doing a good job.

Athletic directors of these low poverty schools also had a long term vision for how athletics can impact students and how this cannot be measured for years to come. Chris (Rural, Low-Mid Poverty) said, "I believe that 20 years from now is when you really do measure your success." Lou (Urban, Low Poverty) had similar sentiments,

> Medals and trophies will rust and dust but the impact lasts forever. The success assessment is going to seem vague but there is a reality to the fact that we don't know how they've done in terms of level and true success in our program until we get about 10-15 years out and they tell us what they're doing and what they're like.

Another stated goal that spanned into the future was wanting student-athletes to "go into wherever they are community members and advocate for sports and that they see the value of it and the importance of it and they just don't let it slip away" (Evan; Rural, Low Poverty). This goal showed that they want to create an athletic experience that helps perpetuate athletic experiences for future students.

As seen through the examples here, athletic directors from higher socioeconomic status communities have goals that relate to success and how this may tie into the future of athletics with the student and how they grow throughout life and perpetuate their experience. Athletic directors from low socioeconomic status communities tended to focus on using athletics to promote the learning of key life skills such as discipline and hard work. For example, Mike from an urban, mid-high poverty school really focused on this throughout his interview. One of his first comments was,

> A lot of times athletics might be a push that can get them a little more focus in the classroom as well -- a little success or a little discipline. Some of the coaches that get after them to be on time, to be productive, good team mates, good people, do the right thing. All the little things that I always thought athletics were important.

The skills that he hopes student-athletes obtain through their participation in sports is that it gives them the opportunity to be 'involved in something bigger' and to add some 'discipline' in their lives. This goal of enriching students' lives through experiences in athletics is not unique to athletic directors of low income communities, but it was a larger focus for them than for schools of higher income communities.

The other key focus of higher poverty schools was to use athletics as a tool to motivate student-athletes toward success through school and through graduation. Part of the process through encouraging students to participate in sports stems from "I think we measure success by getting kids involved in the afterschool programs and see how it translates—if we can reduce the failure rate and get them feeling good about themselves" and in turn "I'm a firm believer that kids that participate in afterschool activities will come to school" (Elwood; Urban, High Poverty). Through the skills learned athletic directors were hoping to "put out good citizens and kids that are responsible," (Bert; Suburban, Mid-High Poverty). This focus on how the skills learned through athletics can transfer into life skills that help them throughout their life and can be used in multiple ways.

One particularly interesting case was in an urban, mid-high level poverty school the athletic director talked about a community initiative helping the school impact its graduation rates. Anonymous community donors created a program that if you went from kindergarten through graduation at a public school in the district you received one hundred percent college tuition paid for at any state school. Rick talked about how 'the socioeconomic status is similar

[as before the program] but there are more kids that are probably here than would be without the [program]." He noted seeing changes in parental and community involvement in the success of the students since the program has started.

Although athletic directors from lower socioeconomic communities tended to focus on certain goals for athletic programs than athletic directors from higher socioeconomic communities, it would be difficult to say that all of them did not want the best for their students. Without prompting athletic directors to talk about specific goals related toward their demographic, this finding was truly unique and demonstrates that what is best for the students can differ between schools. This student centered approach with service is a unique attribute of utilizing stakeholder management techniques from corporate organizations in a secondary education setting. The focus of the service being toward one centered stakeholder group underpins all relationships the athletic director manages. This enables a stakeholder engagement approach with the knowledge that all stakeholders have students' interests in mind when making decisions.

Questionnaire. Many of the goals that athletic directors have for their student-athletes are soft skills and lifelong lessons which are often hard to measure. In quantitative research, participation rates (number of students participating in sports/number of students) and gender equity ratios (number of female participants/number of female students) are often measures used with calculating success for high school athletics from a quantifiable perspective. Regression analysis were performed to understand if type of decision-making approach (by committee or alone) was associated with higher participation rates and higher gender equity ratios. However making decisions by utilizing a committee (p=.166) was not predictive of any association with participation rates. The independent variables of MHSAA classification (Class B p=.001; Class

C *p*=.016; Class D *p*=.049) and socioeconomic status (Middle level poverty *p*=.001; High level poverty *p*=.001) were predictive of having higher participation rates when looking at making major decisions by committee. With using the same independent variables and looking at their impact on gender equity ratios, the once significant MHSAA classification (Class B *p*=.759; Class C *p*=.197; Class D *p*=.147) and socioeconomic status (Middle level poverty *p*=.779; High level poverty *p*=.404) were not associated with higher gender equity ratios. Also, the independent variable of making major decisions by committee was not associated with higher gender equity ratios (*p*=.922). Therefore it can be said that making major decisions by committee was not predictive of higher participation rates or higher gender equity ratios (see Major Decisions Committee Regressions Table 10).

Table 10

Major Decisions Regressions

	Sport Participation Rate					**Gender Equity Ratios**			
	Undstandardized					Undstandardized			
	b	S.E.	β	Sig.		b	S.E.	β	Sig.
(Constant)	0.65	0.052		0		0.843	0.061		0
MHSAA Class B	0.148	0.043	0.316	0.001		0.016	0.051	0.032	0.759
MHSAA Class C	0.127	0.052	0.236	0.016		0.08	0.062	0.142	0.197
MHSAA Class D	0.11	0.056	0.206	0.049		0.097	0.067	0.172	0.147
City	-0.01	0.065	-0.001	0.993		0.06	0.077	0.076	0.437
Suburb	-0.033	0.045	-0.071	0.461		-0.029	0.054	-0.059	0.592
Town	0.041	0.052	0.063	0.426		-0.049	0.062	-0.071	0.433
25-49.9%FRL	-0.147	0.041	-0.342	0.001		-0.014	0.049	-0.031	0.779
50-100%FRL	-0.206	0.062	-0.372	0.001		-0.062	0.074	-0.103	0.404
0-74.9% White Students	-0.074	0.05	-0.144	0.144		-0.016	0.06	-0.03	0.786
Major Decisions by Committee	-0.045	0.033	-0.104	0.166		-0.004	0.039	-0.008	0.922

*Participation rates are calculated by taking the total number of sports participants by the school enrollment. Gender equity ratios are calculated by taking the total number of girl participants by the girls enrolled in the school.

Identical regression analysis was conducted using the same independent variables but now it included the variable of making major decisions alone instead of by committees; this was done to see if being a solo decision-maker on major decisions was associated with higher

participation rates or gender equity ratios. The findings were similar to those of committees; the only significant relationship was between the independent variables MHSAA classification (Class B p=.001; Class C p=.023; Class D p=.059*nearly significant) and socioeconomic status (Middle level poverty p=.001; High level poverty p=.003) and their relationship with participation rates. Therefore, the independent variable of making decisions alone was not statistically significantly associated with higher participation rates (p=.989) or with higher gender equity ratios (p=.891) (see Solo Decision Maker Regressions Table 11 for more details).

Table 11

Solo Decision Maker Regressions

	Sport Participation Rate					**Gender Equity Ratios**			
	Undstandardized					Undstandardized			
	b	S.E.	β	Sig.		b	S.E.	β	Sig.
(Constant)	0.618	0.048		0		0.845	0.056		0
MHSAA Class B	0.154	0.043	0.325	0.001		0.027	0.05	0.056	0.594
MHSAA Class C	0.121	0.053	0.223	0.023		0.06	0.062	0.107	0.335
MHSAA Class D	0.107	0.056	0.199	0.059		0.085	0.066	0.154	0.197
City	0.001	0.065	0.001	0.988		0.056	0.076	0.073	0.462
Suburb	-0.026	0.046	-0.056	0.567		-0.028	0.054	-0.058	0.605
Town	0.045	0.053	0.068	0.396		-0.05	0.062	-0.073	0.423
25-49.9%FRL	-0.136	0.042	-0.317	0.001		-0.002	0.049	-0.004	0.969
50-100%FRL	-0.192	0.063	-0.347	0.003		-0.038	0.074	-0.067	0.61
0-74.9% White Students	-0.098	0.053	-0.198	0.065		-0.046	0.061	-0.086	0.458
Major Decisions Alone	0	0.033	0.001	0.989		-0.005	0.038	-0.012	0.891

Discussion

This study exposed some similarities and confirmed findings from past research. Key stakeholders to high school athletics and characteristics of their relationships were identified. Stakeholders to interscholastic sport included student-athletes, coaches, the principal or superintendent, parents, school board, community, boosters, and governing organizations. These stakeholders are similar to those found in intercollegiate sport (Putler & Wolfe, 1999) although the stakeholder groups of parents and alumni are very distinct to the setting. Athletic directors

characterized stakeholders they felt had higher degrees of salience a higher priority in their management of stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997). Those that were found to be more important to the athletic director were those who they were there to serve, who they managed, and who managed them: student-athletes, coaches, and the principal or superintendent. This study also explored the role of a high school athletic director and the decisions that were part of that role. They make decisions regarding hiring, policy changes to budgets, scheduling, and student discipline to name a few. Within decision-making, athletic directors exposed the role that stakeholders play in the functioning of the department. In particular, this study found that stakeholders who were more of a priority to athletic directors were often incorporated in the making of important decisions to the athletic department; this engagement was a form of stakeholder management for athletic directors. More will be explained about this stakeholder engagement model later. A discussion of the impact that this study has on stakeholder management literature, as well as decision-making literature, is presented.

Stakeholder Management. Applying stakeholder theory in an educational setting provided new insights regarding stakeholder management. Athletic directors discussed the role and importance stakeholders have on the functioning of the athletic department. Stakeholders in an educational setting have different interests and functions than those of corporate organizations. Educational stakeholders may have a stronger connection to a school than a stakeholder would to corporate organizations due to tradition and history. In the interviews, athletic directors commented that some of the student-athletes in the school had parents and grandparents who had played on the school's sports teams which created a history of participation within the family, but also a lengthy connection of the family to the school. This generational aspect of educational stakeholders may play a significant role in the management of

those relationships. Educational stakeholders also act in the capacity of doing what is best for the students, their community and the future of both, creating a unique moral and ethical responsibility of the stakeholder to the students and school. Therefore, educational stakeholders may not be able to separate themselves as easily from their embedded role in the school, which differs from stakeholders to corporate organizations. These may be a few of the characteristics that make applying corporate driven management theories into an educational setting difficult.

An interesting observation of the stakeholders involved with high school athletics is the revolving nature of them. Athletic directors commented on the impact that having 'vested' parents, those that may have had multiple children playing on the same team, can create a different relationship with the program, coach, and athletic director. With that, there was also a sense of turnover with parents and athletes at graduation and as they all move on to the next step of their lives. This turnover was cited as having an impact on stakeholder management and the utilization of stakeholders within and around the athletic department. Therefore, the constant revolving nature of educational stakeholders may create a unique characteristic of stakeholder relationships.

Lastly, as the results showed, the stakeholder that athletic directors prioritized the most did not score high in any salience category. This could have happened for a few reasons. The first reason athletic directors may have been citing student-athletes as their highest prioritized stakeholder is because that is what is socially expected of them to say and that answer is socially desirable, creating a response bias. This juxtaposition could also be due to the lack of transferability of measurements used within corporate stakeholder management to those of educational administration. Characteristics of corporate stakeholders may vary in multiple ways from those in educational settings, for example their motivation for involvement, personal

connections to the served population, and their interest and investment in the purpose of the organization. As discussed earlier, stakeholder theory has not been applied often to research in educational administration and this may have created a juxtaposition with an area for development surrounding a highly prioritized stakeholder that has no claim in the decision process. This may be found in other educational settings, but also in other organizations that are set out to serve a clientele that may not be represented in decision-making processes, such as a nonprofit organization that serves homeless individuals. A new stakeholder salience category could be created based on a stakeholder having little to no power, urgency, or legitimacy, but who is the focus and driving nature of a decision maker and the organization. This could be understood in other educational based settings due to these organizations not being able to exist without this stakeholder, but the stakeholder having little to no control over the delivery of services.

Decision-Making Literature. With regard to extending the decision-making literature, this study contributes to the stakeholder management decision-making literature and the participative decision-making literature. This study has begun to fulfill the call to understand the process behind stakeholder management (Reynolds et al., 2006; Wagner et al., 2011); an individual level analysis was used to compare and contrast stakeholder management techniques across multiple organizations. Using high school athletic directors from public schools was a level of analysis that afforded similar experiences and expectations to be explored across multiple organizations to be explored which would be hard to accomplish in other industries. Other industries have organizational structures and individual roles that vary more than those in education and contain more layers, which makes comparison across positions in organizations

harder than it is in education. This allowed for the building of a case for a stakeholder management technique that was used by multiple managers.

Reynolds and colleagues (2006) found that the type of decision at hand influenced the approach utilized in stakeholder management decision-making. The decision approach applied was different in this study based on the importance of the decision, not just the type of decision as Reynolds described. For example, if the decision was considered a major decision and important to athletic directors, a committee was more likely to be convened by the athletic directors for the decision-making process. Reynolds and colleagues found decision approaches used to make decisions about stakeholders; this study found a decision approach that made decisions *with* stakeholders, engaging them within the complete decision-making process. Stakeholder engagement is defined as involving stakeholders in a positive way (Greenwood, 2007). Altman and Petkus (1994) called for stakeholder engagement in the policy process, although they did not find that managers included stakeholders in the actual making of the decision, which was a finding in this study. The prevalence of utilizing stakeholder engagement in school districts may be a relatively new trend, and one that fits in educational settings versus corporate organizations. A factor that may lead to the success of this tactic is that students are the central component to every stakeholder's involvement, and there may be fewer alternative motives toward involvement. This can be due to the fact that school districts are funded by local taxpayers, and as a group, they want to and can be more involved with how their money is used on a local level, particularly when the focus is on the future of their community via students.

Stakeholder engagement literature has similarities to the participative decision-making tactics used in schools. In education literature, participative decision-making focuses on subordinates (teachers) helping their superiors (principals) make decisions for the organization

(Guzzo, 1996; Smylie, 1992; Tschannen-Moran, 2001), particularly curriculum decisions. This study expands the concept of participative decision-making to include external and internal, primary and secondary stakeholders who may be superiors or subordinates to the central decision-maker. It also broadens the scope of the decisions that stakeholders could participate in by including hiring and policy change decisions. The stakeholder engagement strategy used by athletic directors in this study included individuals from multiple internal organizational levels as well as those outside the organization. The purpose of utilizing this form of stakeholder engagement was said to improve communication of the process and the dissemination of the decision, as well as to increase transparency of the decision and the department as a whole. According to athletic directors, this transparency and inclusion was said to not only increase stakeholder buy-in to the decision, but also the department. Athletic directors felt that the stakeholders involved in the decision process often brought new ideas and information to the process. The tactic of engaging stakeholders from within and outside of the organization in the decision-making process is a contribution to the literature on participative decision-making because it broadens the scope of those involved and in what capacity they are involved.

Therefore, this study extends the findings from the Reynolds et al. (2006) study in that there are other decision-making approaches to the management of stakeholders than what they discovered. Reynolds focused on managers making decisions regarding stakeholders through the use of vignettes, while this study found managers making decisions *with* stakeholders through the use of interviews and a questionnaire. This engagement approach may have been done based on changes in organizational policies that encourage the involvement of various stakeholders. Another possible explanation may be the increased involvement of parents in their children's lives; therefore, athletic directors and other school administrators are engaging with parents more

frequently by default, not by choice. This collective engagement approach may also stem from the culture of sports. Since the passage of Title IX, more mothers and fathers have had the opportunity to participate in sports and, in turn, may feel validated in their involvement with their children's sport experiences. No matter what may be contributing to this collective approach of decision-making, athletic directors saw the value in engaging stakeholders in the decision process and how it increased trust in them as a leader as well as the athletic department and school. This engagement tactic is an extension to the literature on stakeholder management decision-making and enforces the impact of social relations on decision outcomes (Pfeffer et al., 1976). Utilizing stakeholders within the decision process not only engages them with the organization, but also creates a sense of ownership.

Participative decision-making has been found to create a collective climate within organizations (Mokoena, 2011; Somech & Ron, 2007), which is a parallel to sports as communities support their local team. Previous research has found that sport is highly ritualized and is where people share common beliefs (Meyer, 2012); people support a team for their own sense of involvement, social interaction, sentiment, and identity (Drenten, Peters, Leigh, & Hollenbeck, 2009; McDonald & Karg, 2014). Thus, involvement with and commitment to the decision is increased through participation in the decision process (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975; Fullan, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). This commitment was intended to create more engaged stakeholders with an increased level of support of and involvement with the athletic director and the athletic department so that in the future, they may be called upon in various capacities.

Overall, this study contributes to various literatures in multiple ways. Numerous studies regarding the understanding of stakeholder management have called for an extension of this work into new industries (Laplume et al., 2008; Phillips et al., 2003). This study builds on this

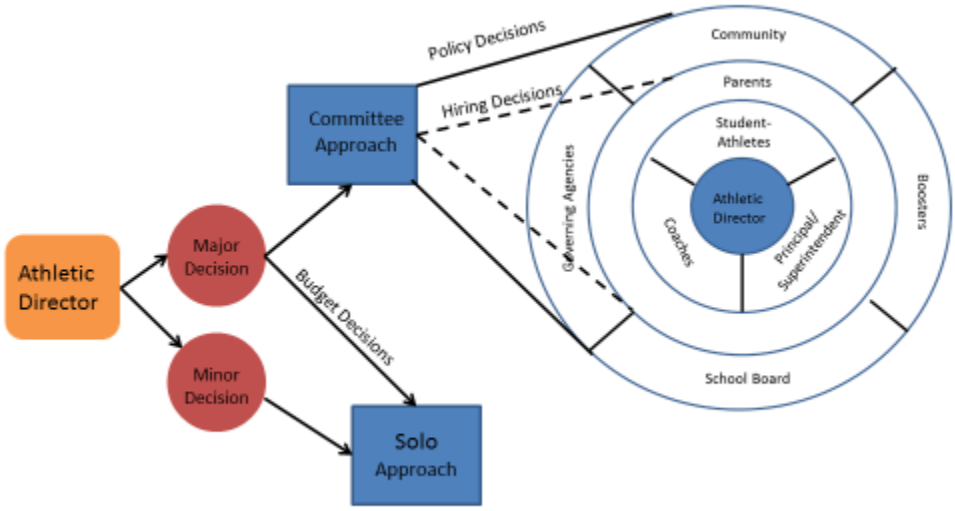
call by beginning to unpack the stakeholders that are involved in secondary education, particularly those involved with athletics. Prior to this study, there were calls for more understanding of stakeholder management from the individual level perspective (Reynolds et al., 2006), and this study extends that by taking the same level manager at multiple similar organizations and comparing their stakeholder management techniques. Therefore, examining high school athletic directors in many schools contributes to the literature from an individual level analysis perspective. Lastly, this study begins to unpack the process of stakeholder decision-making, which was a necessary future direction described in previous literature (Reynolds et al., 2006; Wagner et al., 2011). This study found a stakeholder management technique of engagement within the decision-making process. Stakeholder management decision-making is not just about making decisions regarding stakeholders, but making the best decisions for all involved by incorporating them into the process and the final decision.

Conceptual Framework

Here I present an effort to connect all that was learned in this study in a visual representation. The conceptual framework attempts to highlight the prioritization of stakeholders and how their priority impacts involvement on committees that make decisions for the athletic department. Figure 6 is a representation of the type of decision that has impact on the decision-making approach as well as who is involved in each approach.

Figure 6

Post Analysis Conceptual Framework



Athletic directors in this study classified two types of decision approaches they used based on importance of the decision. The importance of the decision was a critical variable when deciding the decision-making process in which to engage. Athletic directors explained that some decisions they make are routine and do not require as much attention or concern, while other decisions require more attention and concern due to their visibility. Minor decisions, such as scheduling officials and game day management, were done by all athletic directors on their own. This is depicted with the box labeled minor decisions solo showing that all athletic directors described making minor decisions alone.

Where athletic directors differed was in how they made major decisions. Head coaching hires or changing eligibility policies were often considered major decisions. Some athletic directors chose to continue to make major decisions on their own and this is depicted through the box labeled major decisions solo. On the other hand, some athletic directors chose to engage

stakeholders in the decision-making process when making major decisions. Engaging stakeholders in this process often began with primary stakeholders (the inner most circle) and then worked its way to the outer most circle of stakeholders, depending on the decision. One change would be that parents often filled the spot of student-athletes in decision-making due to the maturity of the student-athletes. A solid line depicts that hiring committees were often smaller and engaged mostly primary stakeholders, whereas policy change decisions is represented with a dotted line and includes primary and secondary stakeholders due to the impact that this type of decision can have on all of the stakeholders.

The large circle on the right is a recreation of Freeman and colleagues (2007) work on the prioritization of stakeholders applied in the interscholastic sport setting. This study is situated around the perspectives of the athletic director; therefore, they are represented as the center of the circle. From there, the circle closest to the athletic directors holds the student-athletes, coaches, and the principal/superintendent. These were considered primary stakeholders to participants in this study as athletic directors were most concerned with them in their decision-making and had the most contact with these stakeholders. The next circle outwards contains parents. Although parents would be considered a secondary stakeholder, their involvement and concern with the student-athletes makes them a higher priority than the rest of the secondary stakeholders. The outer most circle contains the rest of the secondary stakeholders: the community, boosters, school board, and governing agencies.

There was no statistically significant association between the decision making approach and any particular outcome, participation rates, or gender equity ratios. Therefore, more research needs to be done in order to understand more thoroughly the reasoning behind using committees for decision-making and the outcomes that may come because of this decision-making approach.

Although there were similarities between this conceptual framework and the one presented in Chapter II, there are ways in which the findings reconfigured the first conceptual framework. This framework utilizes the stakeholder identified within the original framework while maintaining the athletic director's central position; however, the findings of this study enabled a prioritized conceptualization of stakeholders. This conceptualization allowed for a re-creation of Freeman, Harrison and Wicks (2007) prioritization of corporate stakeholders diagram. The former framework attempted to capture the two decision approaches to stakeholder management decision-making, while this study found an engagement tactic that changed the presentation of the decision approach. Also, the framework in this chapter allowed for a depiction of the importance of the decision to be exhibited through major and minor decisions. The findings of this study were able to add more detail to the conceptual framework.

Summary

The qualitative findings were descriptive and purposeful in laying the groundwork informing the questionnaire due to the lack of literature on high school sport administration as well as a lack of understanding in the decision-making process regarding stakeholder management. Combining the qualitative and quantitative data regarding the identification of stakeholders and the nature of those relationships created a landscape of stakeholders in high school athletics and characteristics of their relationships. Results pointed to the stakeholders that had the most frequent interaction with the athletic director were more important to them (Weick, 2001): the student-athletes they serve, the coaches they manage, and the principal or superintendent to whom they report.

The interviews identified various factors impacting athletic director's decision-making process. In particular, the measure of significance of the decision was important to athletic

directors in choosing their decision-making process of engaging a committee or making the decision alone. This finding is similar to what Reynolds and colleagues (2006) found when they defined two different stakeholder management decision-making schemes where the type of decision at hand would be indicative of the decision-making approach utilized. However, this study found a decision approach that was done with stakeholders, not just about them. In particular decisions made with committees often first engaged primary, internal stakeholders, then engaged secondary, external stakeholders if the decision may impact them.

Lastly, this study attempted to link the decision-making approach to certain measurable outcomes. It was found that the type of decision approach utilized was associated with higher participation rates or the gender equity ratios for students.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

Changes are happening in high school athletics that are influenced by the dynamic participation interests of students, legislative changes to education funding, and policies lessening the amount of money that is available for athletics. All of these and many more changes have altered the landscape and role of an athletic director. Athletic directors have adapted to these changing times by adding new sports, taking on more responsibilities as their assistant positions disappear, and engaging stakeholders to help with the functioning of the department. Athletic directors have engaged stakeholders in various capacities from volunteer requests to fundraising responsibilities and other types of support. With this, stakeholders have a more important role in the functioning of the athletic department, which in turn has affected how the athletic director manages the department; therefore, athletic directors must manage these stakeholder relationships in order for the department to function smoothly.

This study sought to understand whom stakeholders were to the athletic director, as well as how high school athletic directors made decisions regarding stakeholder management. A mixed methods approach was used to understand the landscape and challenges of high school athletic directors' decision-making and the management of stakeholders. Results suggested stakeholders who had the most frequent interaction with the athletic director were the most important stakeholders and often times called on to serve on committees when important decisions were being made by the athletic director. Important decisions were the hiring of a

varsity coach or changing athletic department policies such as participation eligibility. This study has begun to explore the management of high school athletics and the role that stakeholders play.

Future Research

Although this study is informative on the stakeholder management techniques utilized by high school athletic directors, there are areas for future research to utilize the findings of this study and extend the work. This study was not able to find direct associations between school-level characteristics or individual level characteristics and the engagement of stakeholders in the decision-making process; this leaves room for other individual level or organizational level characteristics that may impact stakeholder engagement to be discovered.

An individual level variable that may impact stakeholder engagement could be the type of management or leadership philosophy utilized by an athletic director. For example, if an athletic director adheres to policies and procedures and is a bureaucratic style leader, they may utilize committees when making decisions only because it is school policy. Other leadership styles, such as transactional or transformational, may impact the engagement of stakeholders and therefore the type of stakeholder management technique utilized by managers. It may be beneficial to apply the interactionist model of ethical decision-making to understand how individual level components interact with various situational components to engage stakeholders in the decision-making process (Trevino, 1986). Other behavioral factors related to stakeholder management may come from how athletic directors test within the big five personality traits: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Digman, 1990). Are athletic directors who score higher on extraversion and openness to

experience more likely to engage stakeholders within the decision-making processes? These are some examples of individual level characteristics that may impact stakeholder engagement.

In general, there was a lack of diversity amongst the participants. Most participants could be classified as white males, which is representative of this position across schools. However, the homogeneity across the position could lead to conformity in responses during the interview or in the questionnaire. In the future, this study could be extended by seeking out the perspective of women or racial minorities to give a voice to their experience. Due to women scoring higher on emotional intelligence factors (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003; Petrides & Furnham, 2000) it would be interesting to see if that plays a role in their stakeholder management and engagement techniques and how those who are engaged perceive their experience. The experiences of minorities in leadership roles is beginning to draw research attention in various types of organizations (Festekjian, Tram, Murray, Sy, & Huynh, 2014; Ospina & Foldy, 2009), therefore future extensions on this work should include more representation from minorities' experiences with managing stakeholders.

Organizational-level characteristics may be an important factor to consider in further understanding stakeholder management, for example internal policies, culture, and athletic success. For instance, are there policies in place that force the engagement of stakeholders, or is this a choice that athletic directors make in the management of stakeholders? What do these policies that are set forth to engage stakeholders look like, what was their driving force to make this tactic a school policy? Other organizational-level characteristics that could be a factor may be the culture or values placed on athletics within the school. Are athletics highly valued by multiple levels within the organization, and what if those values vary amongst levels, how is that settled? The value placed on athletics by the community has been shown to shape the identity of

the athlete and their athletic experience (Coleman, 1961). The support from other administrators may impact the type of decision-making; for instance, if a superintendent was a former athletic director, he or she may play a different role in athletics than if he or she had not held that role. Lastly, how does athletic department success impact how the decisions are made? If a program like football has great success, are decisions made for that program done by committee more frequently? What about if a program does not have success? Future research could incorporate a measure of competitive success that accounts for state, regional, and conference level success to see if there is a connection with success and the decision-approach utilized. These may be a few organizational-level characteristics that could impact the stakeholder engagement tactics at a school.

Another unanticipated, interesting finding that may impact the management of stakeholders was the funding model used in Michigan for some non-traditional (i.e. bowling, crew, field hockey, etc.) sport opportunities. Sports that have an established place in high school athletics like football, basketball, baseball, volleyball, etc., seem to have cemented their place in the budget, but the sports that are being added are not always so lucky. Many athletic directors alluded to an 'unfunded' model of high school sports where the sport is considered a varsity sport of the school but completely funded by the participants, their parents, boosters, and the community. Sometimes this model was referred to as 'club' or 'unfunded' sport. This model calls on parents to be more involved from a funding perspective; does this mean that parents of these sports have more impact on the decision-making process? What is the frequency of this model, which sports are most often under this pressure? Does this process of not funding sports impact the management of stakeholders? What type of stakeholder management techniques are used for boys or girls sports, are there differences? Who would lead the stakeholder

management process, does the athletic director maintain that role, or does a parent take over and would that look differently?

Understanding the different complexities of stakeholder groups within educational settings could be explored further. Evan and Freeman (1988) described a stakeholder as one who is benefited, is harmed by, or has rights violated by the actions of the organization. There is a strong emphasis on serving a group of people within educational settings and other organizations, in this study the students. The students, though, as an important stakeholder group did not have much, if any, control over their experience. How could a stakeholder like students be considered one with influence but no true power, urgency, or legitimacy in the decision-making process? How does the manager resolve this juxtaposition? Understanding more about this juxtaposition would further our understanding of stakeholder management.

Future research on the decision-making behind stakeholder management could benefit from various methodological techniques. For instance, a longitudinal design would allow for development of the changes in the decision-making process that athletic directors might use when managing stakeholders. It may also provide insights as to why athletic directors who have more tenure have chosen to make decisions alone. Is there a trend where athletic directors seek more approval and utilize committees early in their career and then turn toward making more decisions on their own as they build confidence? A longitudinal design may provide insights into the point in their careers when athletic directors gain enough experience that they begin to make more decisions on their own. A longitudinal design would also allow for an evolution of the process of stakeholder management to become evident. Another methodological direction would be to conduct case studies involving certain populations of athletic directors, targeting women, minorities, those overseeing athletic departments at only rural locations, or only high

poverty locations. A case study approach would allow for depth in understanding of challenges facing certain populations.

Lastly, this study and the understanding of stakeholder management in high school athletics would benefit from expanding this study nationally. Intercollegiate athletic cultures have been found to vary across regions (Baxter, Margavio, & Lambert, 1996), and high school athletics may follow a similar trend in variation based on location. Education at this level is a local and statewide topic, but there are practices and policies that may be similar across states. Understanding educational stakeholder management at a nationwide level may help bring out best practices and tactics for various situations and problems.

Practical Implications

Although this study advances stakeholder management theory, there are lessons to be learned for the high school athletic director. Athletic directors may be encouraged to include various stakeholders in more important decisions made within the athletic department. Those who utilized the engagement of stakeholders in the decision-making process often found that the trust built from the transparency and the inclusion in the decision-making process was beneficial for not only the decision at hand, but also in building strong relationships with stakeholders. The trust built during the decision-making process was seen as a way to manage stakeholders. This type of engaged management helped to build relationships with stakeholders and then, when an athletic director needed to call on a stakeholder for assistance, stakeholders were more willing and accepting to support him or her. Athletic directors, therefore, are encouraged to strategically engage stakeholders throughout their management of the athletic department because the relationships built may be essential in maintaining and growing the athletic department. Transparency and communication are what stakeholders are looking for in their relationships

with schools, and athletic directors should be inclined to include such tactics in their management of relationships with stakeholders.

Athletic directors should also be encouraged to establish policies for managing stakeholders. For instance, creating a policy regarding the management of parental concerns may save the athletic director time and energy. Athletic directors could create a flow chart to describe which types of concerns and issues should be directed toward which stakeholder group. If a parent comes directly to the athletic director with complaints about playing time for their child in the game, this chart may ask the parent to start by taking that concern to the coach first, rather than going directly to the athletic director who does not control playing time. A decision flow chart is a stakeholder management technique that may help relieve some time spent on managing stakeholders. It may also help other stakeholders deal with questions regarding athletics if they know whom to turn to with each type of concern.

Implementing various forms of communication could provide an avenue for athletic directors to connect with stakeholders as well. Social media has proven to be a great tactic for many organizations to implement to ensure timely and accurate information is disbursed to stakeholders. This communication could include everything from game highlights and cancellations due to weather to celebrating successes of the athletes and the disbursement of key deadlines. Athletic directors should be encouraged to take part in the school board meetings, if possible, to present the athletic department throughout the school year to explain and highlight what has happened. Giving the school board information on the program engages them in its successes and failures and also provides a connection to the program.

Communication is key with all stakeholders; athletic directors should not overlook the importance of communicating policies and procedures with their coaches. Coaches have the

most frequent and meaningful interaction with students, the most important stakeholder. Therefore, athletic directors should set up a regular form of communication with all coaches; it may be in the form of a weekly email or maybe monthly meetings to communicate necessary information. These are a few stakeholder engagement and management tactics that could be helpful for high school athletic directors to practice.

Limitations

As with any research, the researcher needs to understand the limitations of the study. First and foremost in an interview study, it is important to acknowledge the place that I play in conducting the research. I am part of the social world that I am studying and I have to acknowledge that I cannot avoid influencing or being influenced by the data collection; I need to acknowledge this reflexively (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) and account for it throughout the collection and analysis of the data. As Weiss states, "What you can't get away with is the failure to work with the respondent as a partner in the production of useful material" (pg. 119). Understanding that being involved in the research process as an interviewer, I have to realize the validity threat that I pose and to account for it throughout the collection of data to the presentation of data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). My experiences as a high school athlete and my current association with the University of Michigan may have had an impact on the access to participants or their trustworthiness of my research process. I used an open-ended interview for the purpose of minimizing researcher bias (Maxwell, 2013). I tried to be as approachable as possible while still explaining the IRB process and the protection that it allows research participants. Even so, participants or non-respondents may have been unwilling to candidly share their experiences with stakeholders due to my association with the university. In order to try and ensure accurateness of the data, triangulation between qualitative and

quantitative data was conducted (Greene, 2007), as well as peer debriefing (Denizin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

There were other limitations posed to this study due to the nature of fieldwork. The recruitment of participants can be complicated. Part of the complication that this study ran into was timing. Interviews began at the very end of the school year and ran into the summer, then resumed at the beginning of the fall sports season and into the beginning of the school year. This can be a very busy time for athletic directors due to the nature of finishing or starting the sports season. Follow up studies could be done at different times of the year. Another limitation that was posed was access to women. Although women were sought out for participation based on internet searches and gender-neutral names, search efforts always led to a male athletic directors. Therefore, a different sampling technique may be useful in ensuring participation from women and minorities.

This study began exploratory in nature. With little to no empirical research done in this setting, care was taken to ensure authentic representation of the experience of athletic directors. Interviews were conducted first to begin to understand the context and then were followed by the questionnaire. Even with the mixed methods approach, this study was conducted in one state only, which means in order to apply these findings to other states, care must be taken to understand the educational and sport contexts in different locations. Variations in state-level governing policies for athletics may impact the administration of sports, possibly limiting the autonomy of the athletic director. For example, some states have banned schools from implementing pay to participate fees; therefore, the process of implementing fees and collecting the money might look very different across states. Without having to engage parents through charging participation fees, stakeholder management may occur differently for athletic directors

of those states. This and other state-level variations must be considered when adapting the study to include more states or in generalizing the findings to other states with different educational policies.

Conclusion

In the end, the purpose of this study was to understand the process of stakeholder management from the perspective of the high school athletic director. This was accomplished through a mixed methods approach, and the findings showed that athletic directors were engaging stakeholders within the decision-making process in order to gain stakeholder's trust through transparency and communication of decisions made in the athletic department. Future research can extend these findings to understand if various individual level or organizational-level characteristics are more prone to a stakeholder engagement approach, and what the perspective is of the stakeholders that are being engaged in the decision-making process.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

1) I'm trying to understand your role as athletic director a bit better, what are some of the decisions you make in your role as athletic director?
2) Reflecting on a decisions (use example given), what were your goals at the time?
    a. What were the key pressures (internal/external)?
    b. What led to the decision?
    c. Who did you work with when making that decision? (Internal/External)
    d. In what capacity did you work with _____(person/group)?
3) What were your stakeholders' (use each example given) objectives in the decision?
4) How do you decide which person/group to attend to when making _____ decision?
    a. What same tactics do you use with each stakeholder?
    b. Do these factors change with each decision? (Pay-to-play, commercialization, booster clubs)
    c. What types of expectations do _____(each of your stakeholders) bring to the table?
    d. How do you attend to those expectations?
5) You referred to _____ in the decision around _____, what types of expectations do _____(each of your stakeholders) bring to the decision?
        a. How do you attend to those expectations?
        b. What is it about your relationship with _____ that makes you attend to them?
        c. (Repeat w/ other resource decisions/stakeholders)
6) Is there anything else you feel that I should know about how you make decisions? Attend to stakeholders?
7) How is success measured in athletics? For you? For the athletic department?
    a. How do you resolve differences among these groups?

Thank you for your time, if I have any follow up questions, do you mind if I contact you?

Appendix B

Questionnaire

Stakeholder Management in High School Sports: An individual level analysis

The purpose of this survey will be to capture the perspective of high school athletic directors and their perceptions and decisions made around different athletic stakeholders. I am interested in how you make decisions balancing various interests of stakeholders. Therefore, your feedback is important. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. Your participation is strictly voluntary and all information will be kept confidential. There will be no connection to you specifically in the results or future publications from this survey. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at jzdroik@umich.edu. Thank you for your participation.

1. When tending to decisions you make in the athletic department, whose interests and priorities do you account for most? (Rank the person/group that you satisfy the most often as #1, the person/group you satisfy the least as #9; if there is a group you do not attend to use NA [not applicable]).

_____Student-athletes
_____Coaches
_____Administration (Principal/Superintendent)
_____School Board
_____Parents
_____Community
_____Athletic Boosters
_____Athletic Conference or League/State Associations
_____Other_____

2) Please respond to the following statements.

Student-athletes	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Student-athletes have power in athletic department decisions.							

Student-athletes are frequently involved in athletic department decisions.							
Student-athletes have a socially acceptable and expected claim in athletic department decisions.							

Coaches	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Coaches have power in athletic department decisions.							
Coaches are frequently involved in athletic department decisions.							
Coaches have a socially acceptable and expected claim in athletic department decisions.							
Coaches have control over decisions about resources in the athletic department.							

Administration (Principal/Superintendent)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The principal/superintendent has power in athletic department decisions.							
The principal/superintendent is frequently involved with athletic department decisions.							
The principal/superintendent has a socially acceptable and expected claim in athletic department decisions.							

The principal/superintendent controls critical resources for the athletic department.							
The principal/superintendent controls decisions about resources in the athletic department.							

School Board	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school board has power in athletic department decisions.							
The school board is frequently involved in athletic department decisions.							
The school board has a socially acceptable and expected claim in athletic department decisions.							
The school board controls critical resources for the athletic department.							
The school board controls decisions about resources in the athletic department.							

Parents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Parents have power in athletic department decisions.							
Parents are frequently involved the athletic department decisions.							

Parents have a socially acceptable and expected claim on athletic department decisions.							
Parents control critical resources for the athletic department.							
Parents control decisions about resources in the athletic department.							

Community	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The community has power in athletic department decisions.							
The community is frequently involved in athletic department decisions.							
The community has a socially acceptable and expected claim in athletic department decisions.							
The community controls critical resources for the athletic department.							
The community controls decisions about resources for the athletic department.							

Athletic Booster Club	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The booster club has power in athletic department decisions.							

The booster club is frequently involved in athletic department decisions.							
The booster club has a socially acceptable and expected claim in athletic department decisions.							
The booster club controls critical resources for the athletic department.							
The booster club controls decisions about resources in the athletic department.							

Athletic Conference/State Association	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The athletic conference/state association has power in athletic department decisions.							
The athletic conference/state association is frequently involved in the athletic department decisions.							
The athletic conference/state association has a socially acceptable and expected claim in athletic department decisions.							

Other _____	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
_____ has power in athletic department decisions.							

The _____ is frequently involved in athletic department decisions.							
_____ has a socially acceptable and expected claim in athletic department decisions.							
_____ controls critical resources for the athletic department.							
_____ controls decisions about resources in the athletic department.							

Support

My principal values my contribution to the well-being of our school. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
My principal appreciates extra effort from me. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
My principal strongly considers my goals and values. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
My principal wants to know if I have any complaints. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
My principal takes my best interests into account when he/she makes decisions that affect me.
Help is available from my principal when I have a problem. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
My principal is willing to help me when I need a special favor. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
My principal cares about my opinions. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
My principal takes pride in my accomplishments. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)

Decision Frames- The following questions are regarding the importance of the decisions you make and how you make them.

I consider decisions about **budgeting** to be major decisions. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I consider decisions about **changing policies** to be major decisions. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I consider decisions about **facility changes and improvements** to be major decisions. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)

I consider decisions about **hiring coaches** to be a major decision. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I consider decisions about **improving efficiencies of departmental processes** to be a major decision. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I consider decisions about **student discipline** to be a major decision. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I consider decisions about **game management** to be a major decision. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I consider decisions about **personnel evaluation** to be a major decision (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I consider decisions about **scheduling games and officials** to be a major decision. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I frequently employ committees when making major decisions. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I frequently employ committees when making minor decisions. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I frequently look for opportunities for cooperation when making major decisions. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I frequently look for opportunities for cooperation when making minor decisions. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I frequently make major decisions on my own. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)
I frequently make minor decisions on my own. (7 pt. Likert; Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree)

What percentage of students in your high school participate in athletics? Slide # Scale
What percentage of the student population of boys participates in athletics? Slide # Scale
What percentage of the student population of girls participates in athletics? Slide # Scale
What sports do you offer for boys/girls? (Include check box of opportunities)
Baseball, Basketball, Bowling, Competitive Cheer, Crew, Cross Country, Equestrian, Field Hockey, Figure Skating, Football, Golf, Gymnastics, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Soccer, Softball, Swimming, Synchronized Swimming, Tennis, Track, Volleyball, Water Polo, Wrestling

Demographic information:

Current Title:
Age #
Gender M/F
Race White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Other
Years in Current Position as AD #
Years as Athletic Director (other districts) #
Do you coach currently? Y/N
Have you coached in the past? Y/N
Are you currently a teacher in the district? Y/N
Are you a former teacher of the district? Y/N

School Information

MHSAA Classification ____A _____B _____C _____D

What is the name of your high school? (This will not be connected to your responses, just to be used to gather school level data.)

Thank you for your participation. Any data collected will be anonymized and will not be identifiable after collection.

Appendix C

List of Codes

Stakeholder Management in High School Sports: An individual level analysis

I. Structure
   a. Hierarchy- Mention of 'chain of command' or other references to who or how issues get dealt within hierarchy
      i. Direct report- Reference to who they directly report to (i.e. principal)
      ii. Administrative Teams- discussion around administration in the school collectively meeting regularly for formal meetings, lunches, etc.
   b. Support
      i. Internal- reference to support from internal stakeholders, i.e. principal, superintendent or school board
      ii. Booster- way the booster club is supportive or how they support the athletic director or the athletic department
         1. Structure- how booster club is structured, i.e. one club for all sports, each sport having their own, or both
      iii. Culture- references to importance of athletics in the school culture
         1. Community Culture- reference to how the community supports athletics
         2. School culture
   c. Goals for athletics- purpose, driving force
      i. AD's goals for athletics- references to their goals or measures of success
      ii. School administration's goals for athletics- goals or measures of success from an administrator's point of view
      iii. Community's goals- references to goals or measures of success from the community's perspective
   d. Values- Reasons for athletics
      i. "What's best for kids"
      ii. Athletics as classroom or 'educational athletics'
      iii. Lifelong skills learned in athletics- i.e. cooperation, winning, losing, etc.
      iv. Sports as privilege- not a right but an extra-curricular
      v. Winning as byproduct of doing things right
II. Decisions
   a. Major

i. Budgeting- reference to making budgetary decisions (revenue generation, discretionary spending, etc.)
    1. Commercialization- reference to selling ad space or other commercialization techniques
ii. Facilities- improvements, maintenance, typically with reference to bonds, millages or funding of facility improvements
iii. Hiring of coaches- references to decisions around hiring coaches
iv. Policy changes- changes in rules and policies, eligibility, etc.
v. Processes- social media, administration streamlining etc.

b. Minor
i. Personnel Evaluation/Mgmt- evaluating coaches, teachers, etc.
ii. Scheduling games
iii. Scheduling officials
iv. Game management- references to the actual management of events
v. Discipline of students/Eligibility

III. Process of Decision Making- general comments on DM Process
a. Flow
i. Reference to other schools- comparison to other schools, info gathering from others successes and failures
ii. Communication- references to communication and getting info disseminated
iii. Personal Philosophies- "My personal philosophy", how they do things
b. Use of committees- references to getting multiple stakeholder involved in decision making, and the consequences
c. Cooperation- references to 'working with' 1-2 people to make decisions, resolve conflicts, typically with parents or coaches
d. Solo decision maker-self made decisions quick action, no reference to using others

IV. Outcomes
a. Measure of success
i. Athletic Director
ii. School District
iii. Community

V. Inductive Stakeholder Codes
a. Prioritization
i. Internal (students, principals, superintendent, school board)
ii. External (parents, boosters, community)
b. Influence Strategies
c. Salience

VI. Descriptives

a. Title- current title, mostly AD, some have Asst. Prin., teacher, coach, etc.
b. Tenure- how long they have been in their current position
c. P2P- references of pay to participate, amounts, history, application, revenue, etc.
d. Participation Rates- number or rate of participation
e. School of Choice- references to school of choice at their school
f. Department Budget- how much of the school budget goes toward athletics
g. Former roles- what other positions did they have before their current role

VII. Changes in H.S. Athletics- general references to changes in high school sport
a. References to College athletics- comparisons made to college athletics or lessons learned, etc.
b. Co-operative sports- descriptives about how co-op sports work and if they have any within their school

VIII. Socioeconomic Status
a. Low Poverty <25% students on Free and Reduced Lunch
b. Low-Mid Poverty 25-49.9% students on Free and Reduced Lunch
c. Mid-High Poverty 50-74.9% students on Free and Reduced Lunch
d. High Poverty >75% students on Free and Reduced Lunch

IX. Urbanicity
a. Urban
b. Suburban
c. Rural

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