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## High School Football Dynasties: Investigating the Source of Their Sustained Competitive Advantage

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL DYNASTIES:  
INVESTIGATING THE SOURCE OF THEIR  
SUSTAINED COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

By

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## ABSTRACT

The resource-based view of the firm (RBV) as well as the sustained competitive advantage model developed by Barney (1991) offer an approach to examining available resources and how those resources affect an organization's success and or effectiveness. Previous studies in sport management literature examined secondary data in an attempt to better understand sustained competitive advantage. This study takes the next step through interviews with program stakeholders as well as using secondary data to better understand how and why sustained competitive advantage exists in high school football. The study helps explore not only what resources influence success, but also to what extent the different resources shape program success according to the stakeholders. Eight emerging concepts were developed as resources potentially influencing program success. The resources are examined in relation to Barney's (1991) four tenets of sustained competitive advantage (value, rareness, imperfect imitability, and non-substitutability). Furthermore, the study compares three different winning programs and their use of the eight resources. While none of the identified resources satisfy all four of Barney's (1991) requirements, an argument can be made that the resources bundled together as one resource, organizational culture, lead to the programs' continued success. The results encourage further investigation of competitive sport using the RBV and sustained competitive advantage frameworks.

## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

#### **Introduction**

The resource-based view of the firm (RBV) as well as the sustained competitive advantage model developed by Barney (1991) offer an approach to examining available resources and how those resources affect an organization's success and or effectiveness. Competition has been recorded on the walls of caves, through ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, Medieval Times, and continues today in various forms, most recognizably in sport. Contested on a variety of levels from recreational leagues to professionals to international competitions, sport consumes not just Americans, but the world as well. Winning is the most common method used for determining the more successful organizations in competitive sport (Gladden, Milne, & Sutton, 1998; Padilla & Baumer, 1994; Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Smart & Wolfe, 2000). Determining why certain groups are able to win more frequently and consistently is an interesting question worthy of continued investigation.

Consistently winning championships is not easy whether at the professional, college, or high school level. Teams like Green Bay Packers of the 1960's, the Edmonton Oilers of the 1980's, the 1990's Chicago Bulls, the New York Yankees, and the UCLA Bruins coached by John Wooden all accomplished this feat and were crowned dynasties. Across America there are high schools that continually dominate not only the district they compete in, but make it deep into the playoffs and win state championships. One example is the Valdosta

Wildcats high school football team which has an all-time record of 816-173-34 time ([www.valdostawildcats.com](http://www.valdostawildcats.com)). The Wildcats could go 0-10 for the next 60 years and still have an overall winning percentage of .514.

The Converse Judson Rockets a high school outside of San Antonio, Texas, won the 2002 Texas 5A High School Championship. It was the school's sixth state championship since 1983 and their ninth appearance in the championship game. Odessa Permian, from West Texas, is 6-4 in state championship games since winning their first championship in 1965 ([www.texasfootball.com](http://www.texasfootball.com)). This does not reflect the many times that these programs have lost in the semi-finals of the state playoffs or won the district title before bowing out in the playoffs.

De la Salle from the Concord, California, a San Francisco area school won 151 consecutive games starting during the 1991 season and ending in August 2004. Bob Ladouceur the school's head coach since 1979 boasts an overall record of 234-14-1 (Denziet-Lewis, 1999; [www.dlshs.edu](http://www.dlshs.edu)). These schools' football programs have all been able to display a consistent ability to win high school football games for an extended period of time. They compete at a high level against the best competition. It is great to win more often than you lose and it is an even greater achievement to win district, regional and a state title for a given season. These programs however, are an example of some schools from around the country that have been able to maintain their success for long periods of time. Therefore, one has to wonder what resources these programs have available to them and how the resources are employed by the different teams to help the win. This study investigated three high school football programs that all won over 150 games, and at least three state championships in the last 20 years.

Sustained competitive advantage research is still new to the sport management field. Amis, Pant, and Slack did the first study using the framework in 1997, examining its effects on sport sponsorships. Berman, Down, and Hill (2002) performed a statistical analysis on National Basketball Association (NBA) teams and Smart and Wolfe (2000) did a case study of Pennsylvania State University's (PSU) football program. Berman et al's (2002) study examined

resources that influenced the number of victories and assists a team earned and found that there were diminishing returns after an unspecified amount of time. Smart and Wolfe (2000) concluded coaching has the greatest impact on a college football program success. Both of these studies used secondary data to examine sustained competitive advantage in competitive sport. This study took the next step and used interviews with program stakeholders as well as secondary data to better understand how and why sustained competitive advantage exists in high school football. The study helps explain not only what resources influence success, but also to what extent the different resources shape program success according to the stakeholders.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Competitive advantage exists in society in a plethora of areas from industry to education to sport. Sustained competitive advantage as part resource-based view as developed in the strategic management literature works to explain why and how groups are more successful for extended periods of time (Barney, 1991; Conner, 1991).

Barney (1991) developed a model that takes organization resources and examines whether individual resources are valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and substitutable (see Figure 1). Valuable resources are those which enhance the group's position in its field, also they are resources that fight threats from the environment (Barney, 1991). Secondly, resources need to be rare or unique. For resources to possess this characteristic they must not be commonly available to competitors or likely to develop amongst them (Barney, 1991; Lippman & Rummelt, 1982). According to Diedrickx and Cool (1989), historical dependency, causal ambiguity, and social complexity are the three ways that a resource can be imperfectly imitable, meaning that other organizations cannot develop the resource. The fourth factor is substitutability, described as competing groups having no way of mounting a related strategy or comparable resource (Barney, 1991). Value, rareness, imperfect imitability, and substitutability are the

characteristics the resources will be evaluated on as suggested by Barney (1991). Next the resources are compared amongst the different programs.

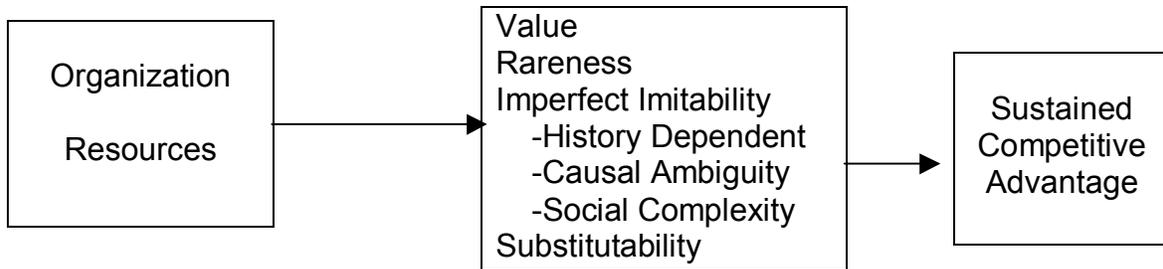


Figure 1: The relationship between firm resources, value, rareness, imperfect imitability, and substitutability, and sustained competitive advantage. Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 112.

Since a resource must be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and not have any valid substitutes to contribute to a group's sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991); the standard for being a resource that adds to an organization's sustained competitive advantage is high. When applied to the current context of interest, the resources available to the high school football programs need to be identified. After the resources are identified, they can be assessed according to the framework of Barney's model. For this research, resources are identified and measured by the model, as well as compared amongst the different high school football programs participating in the study.

High school football programs are inundated with both tangible and intangible resources (see Figure 2, on next page) making competitive sport a good fit for sustained competitive advantage research (Berman et al., 2002). This study will use the resources discussed by participants at programs determined to be successful and compared across different geographical regions. Assessments based on collected data are the next step in sustained competitive advantage research for competitive sport. Competitive sport teams have a variety of resources at their disposal (Berman et al., 2002) and determining which ones foster sustained competitive advantage through Barney's

(1991) framework can help programs with those resources develop them further and those without them try to attain those resources.

- 1) Inside the Program
  - i) Coaches
    - (a) Size of Coaching Staff
    - (b) Qualifications
      - 1. Education
      - 2. Certifications
    - (c) Experience
      - 1. Overall
      - 2. With current program
  - ii) Players
    - (a) Number in Program
    - (b) Ethnic Breakdown of Rosters
    - (c) Talent or Success Rate (How many athletes go on to play college or professional athletics, not just in football)
    - (d) Team's Conditioning Program
  - iii) Finances
    - (a) Sources
    - (b) Amounts
    - (c) Budget allocations
  - iv) Facilities
  - v) Community Support/Booster Club
  - vi) Parental Involvement
  - vii) Program History
    - (a) Traditions
    - (b) Culture of the program
  - viii) Preparing for Future Seasons
  - ix) Scheduling Philosophy
- 2) Outside Factors
  - i) Demographics
    - (a) Community
      - 1. Ethnic breakdown
      - 2. Home attendance
      - 3. Other signs of support for the program
    - (b) Socio-Economic Status
      - 1. School
      - 2. Community
    - (c) Area
      - 1. Inner-city
      - 2. Suburban
      - 3. Single school district
  - ii) Administration and Non-playing Students
    - (a) Principal
    - (b) Athletic Director
    - (c) Teachers
    - (d) Support Staff
    - (e) Student Body
  - iii) Competition from Universities and/or Professional Teams
    - (a) For Financial Support
    - (b) For Community Support

*Figure 2:* Factors potentially influencing the sustained competitive advantage of high school football.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the current study is to evaluate the relative contributions to sustained success of high school football programs based on the factors identified by the study's participants. Previous studies have examined secondary data in determining sport team success (Berman et al., 2002; Smart & Wolfe 2000). The current study used secondary data, in addition to primary data gathered from various sources to gain an understanding of why sustained competitive advantage exists in competitive sport. The current study took another step forward in sustained competitive advantage research as it relates to competitive sport by comparing several programs which have all been successful over the past two decades.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions will be investigated:

1. Do these programs possess resources with all four characteristics of sustained competitive advantage?
2. Do these resources differ amongst successful programs from different geographic regions?

## **Significance and Implications of the Study**

The current study's usefulness extends to both practitioners and researchers. Competitive sport is a "zero-sum game", meaning that if one team wins then another team has to lose (Chelladurai, 1999). It is a rare occasion when teams split a championship or share the gold medal, like in pairs skating at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics (Spear, 2002). A team can only improve their winning percentage if a different team's winning percentage or a number of different teams' winning percentage decrease so that a balance of .500 is met. While I do not infer to the larger population of all high school football programs,

other sports, or sports at the professional, college, or club levels, it is possible that coaches and athletic directors of these programs may try to implement the topics discovered and discussed in the study. The study furthered research in sport management by first examining more closely the phenomenon of continued success in competitive sport, commonly referred to as dynasties (King, 1989). The study asked stakeholders not only why they think their programs are successful, but attempt to get examples of how they go about doing the things that they believe make them winners. Sustained competitive advantage has not been studied at this deeper level in sport (Amis et al., 1997; Berman et al., 2002; Smart & Wolfe 2000). Secondly, the current study compared three different successful programs. Smart and Wolfe (2000) did some comparison amongst three different universities, but the current study evaluated three high school football programs in greater detail. This study served both practitioners and researchers by probing for detail from the participants on how and why they are able to continually succeed.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The researcher acknowledges the following limitations, but efforts will be made to minimize the effect of the following:

1. The sample is not to be used for generalization of outcomes, but rather as representative of itself.
2. When interviewing informants, misinterpretations of the given information may occur.
3. Case studies are limited to their unique structure, uses, and problems including such items as bias, case selection, and ethics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).
4. The methodology used for the study decreases objectivity.
5. All factors that may influence sustained competitive advantage may not be discovered and/or discussed.

6. Certain resources that may impact sustained competitive advantage in high school football programs may not be quantifiable, therefore making them difficult to measure.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The researcher delimited the study in the following ways:

1. The participants in this study will all come from the Southeastern United States.
2. By conducting a multi-case study, the researcher is responsible for setting the guidelines of study.
3. The research projects' size and scope has been made small in order to manage the data that will be collected, and in order to maintain homogeneity (Rouse & Dallenbach, 1999).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

This review describes the different approaches to the resource-based view of the firm, focusing on sustained competitive advantage. It will start with the roots of RBV and sustained competitive advantage as developed through organizational behavior, specifically, organizational culture and organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, the differences between competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness will be explained. Organizational effectiveness concentrates on individual firms and how individual firms operate internally, while resource-based view of the firm and sustained competitive advantage examine how a group uses its resources while comparing that productivity with other groups in a similar industry. Additionally, the review will explain the different concepts involved in sustained competitive advantage as well as presenting a framework for examining organizations, specifically athletic teams. Sustained competitive advantage's focus on rare, valuable, imperfectly imitable, and nonsubstitutable resources creates its importance to researchers and practitioners in hopes of making groups, firms, and teams better. Next, the review will discuss the research that has already been done in sport management on sustained competitive advantage. Finally, the usefulness of qualitative methods when researching sustained competitive advantage, RBV, and competitive sport organizations will be presented.

Sustained success, competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness are abstract constructs because of the variety of ways in which they are perceived and may be measured. According to Cameron (1980),

realizing that “no single approach to the evaluation of effectiveness is appropriate in all circumstances or for all organization types” is an important first step in better understanding the constructs (p. 70). An organization’s goal setting and attainment, its internal processes or abilities to obtain resources are just a few of the ways organizational effectiveness is measured (Cameron, 1986; Chelladurai, 1987; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Zammuto, 1984). As organizational effectiveness is a fundamental question of organizational behavior there are a myriad of approaches attempting to help researchers and practitioners better understand the constructs (Cameron, 1986). The resource-based view of the firm offers a framework from strategic management as one possible way to better understand organizational effectiveness by examining rare and valuable resources which are purported to contribute to an organization’s effectiveness, efficiency, and advantage over competitors (Barney, 1991; Priem & Butler, 2001). Strategic management literature works to explain what an organization’s goals are and how that organization goes about obtaining its objectives (Chandler, 1962). The resource-based view and sustained competitive advantage gained attention in the early 1990’s (Barney, 1991; Conner 1991), and examines a firm’s use of resources to outperform competitors (Porter, 1985).

Proper use of resources, especially intangible ones is critical to sustained competitive advantage and the resource-based view. Sport management is saturated with intangible resources, therefore making it a good industry to examine sustained competitive advantage and the resource-based view of the firm (Berman et al., 2002). The resource-based view and sustained competitive advantage has only been applied explicitly to sport management within the past six years (Amis et al., 1997; Berman et al., 2002; Smart & Wolfe, 2000). Sport is a good area of study for this conceptual framework because of the ease of measuring success in sport. Winning games is the simplest measure used to determine if competitive advantage and/or success exist in sport (Gladden et al., 1998; Padilla & Baumer, 1994; Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Smart & Wolfe, 2000). Successful sport programs are argued to be good for college communities through increased applications, fundraising, the institution’s reputation, and just

the general welfare of those on campus (Adler & Adler, 1991; Beyer & Hannah, 1997; Shanley & Langfred, 1997; Thelin, 1996). Winning is often used as a judge of success in sport because it is an easy statistic to capture, and use in the many studies in sport management conducted on college athletic programs, professional sport teams and national sport organizations (Doherty, 1998). Winning is a well-understood concept by both researchers and practitioners that relates easily to success (Berman et al., 2002). Sustained competitive advantage and the resource-based view of the firm provide a framework to investigate why different organizations, including sport teams are able to beat their competitors consistently for long periods of time.

### **Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture first needs to be defined, than its relevance to the current study will be discussed. Culture is encountered by people daily in everything they do; from school, to church, to work, to sport, and it can even be specific to the area in which a person lives. Organizational culture can be defined in a plethora of ways and on different levels. One common definition describes observed mannerism normalcies, basically how people routinely interact with one another through language and actions (Goffman, 1959; Van Maanen, 1979). Homans (1950) discussed the norms that develop in organizations. A third way organizational culture has been defined is by the prominent values advocated, like “friendly service” (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). It can also be a philosophy which steers an organization (Ouchi, 1981; Pascale & Athos, 1981). Organizational culture can also be following the policies and procedures of an organization, especially for new employees hoping to fit in with the group (Ritti & Funkhouser, 1982; Schein, 1968, 1978; Van Maanen, 1976, 1979). Additionally, organizational culture can be viewed as the way an organization handles customers and other nonmembers of the organization. This type of culture is referred to as climate (Tagiuri & Litwin, 1968). According to

Schein (1985) these definitions are all part of organizational culture, but they do not get at its core.

Schein (1985) discusses organizational culture on three levels, starting with artifacts, then values and finally assumptions. The first artifacts can be viewed by what is obvious to even the casual observer, through patterns of behavior and stylistic approaches to events or tangible things like uniforms and team mascots. An example of values might be new employees falling in line with what more experienced personnel do for day-to-day operations (Schein, 1985). “At the deeper and less visible level, culture refers to values that are shared by the people in a group and that tend to persist over time even when group membership changes,” (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). At this second level, creating change is more difficult because most people are unaware of what binds them with the others. Organizational culture may be grounded in values, like hard work or friendliness and can vary greatly amongst different groups (Schein, 1985). Finally, there are basic underlying assumptions, which are ideas and ways of acting that are so second nature within an organization that they are taken for granted. The ideas are so entrenched within the group that to think or act on a different philosophy is incomprehensible (Schein, 1985). For example, if the members of a team were known to always put winning ahead of individual goals, the players and coaches would not even realize that the possibility of breaking records existed.

Hatch (1993) developed “The Cultural Dynamics Model” (Figure 3), which is an extension of Schein’s (1985) model on organizational culture because it adds the symbolic-interpretive perspectives. Hatch (1993) adds symbols to Schein’s artifacts, values, and assumptions along with linkages between these levels. The links called processes are manifestation, realization, symbolization, and interpretation. Manifestation process is the organization’s cultural values. Proactive manifestations are thoughts and feelings rooted in cultural assumptions. Retroactive manifestations constantly keep an organization aligning its values with the culture (Hatch, 1993). Realization is turning values into processes or objects (artifacts in Schein’s (1985) model), similar to self-

fulfilling prophecies (Weick, 1987). Symbolization in the dynamic perspective refers to not only an object's physical presence but also its surplus meaning (Cohen, 1985). Finally, Hatch (1993) discusses interpretation, which is giving meaning to an experience or artifact (Shutz, 1970), which may be derived from the symbolization. Manifestation, realization, symbolization, and interpretation work in a circular fashion with assumptions, values, artifacts and symbols.

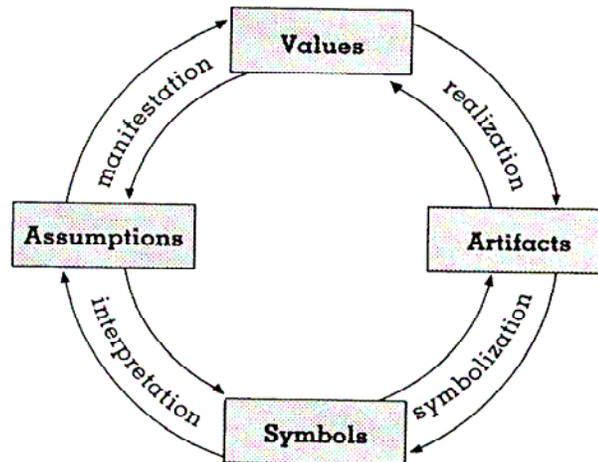


Figure 3: The cultural dynamics model. Hatch, M. J. (1993). The dynamics of organizational culture. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(4), 660.

Much can be learned about a group based on its organizational culture, because of organizational culture's links to a group's values and practices (Yean-Sub Lim & Cromartie, 2001). Many argue that a connection exists between culture and effectiveness (Frost et al., 1985; Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Yean-Sub Lim & Cromartie, 2001; Schein, 1985). In sport the connection between organizational culture and success or effectiveness has been studied (Carron & Hausenblaus, 1998; Carron, Spink, & Prapavessis, 1997; Hardy & Crace, 1997; Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley, & Carron, 2001; Weinberg & McDermott, 2002), because there is an intuitive connection between effectiveness and group culture. Weinberg and McDermott (2002) found that leaders believe cohesion is important for a group to succeed, but not always easy to develop. Organizational culture is deep-rooted beliefs shared by a group that give that group an identity and influence how it performs (Yean-Sub Lim & Cromartie, 2001) and the type

and strength of that culture can influence the group's success and effectiveness (Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Schein, 1985).

### **Organizational Effectiveness**

Organizational effectiveness is often described as the most important outcome variable in all of organizational science (Chelladurai, 1987; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Zammuto, 1984). The organizations studied may be large or small, profit or non-profit based, but the question of means and ends remains (Georgopoulos & Tannenbaum, 1957). Four prominent model classes exist in trying to capture the concept of organizational effectiveness: 1) The Goals Model, 2) System Resources Model, 3) The Process Model, and 4) The Multiple-Constituency Model (Chelladurai, 1987).

Goal accomplishment is one way suggested to examine whether an organization is effective or not. This method is the most commonly used and may take a variety of forms. The "Goals Model" claims that an organization is effective based on its ability to achieve its goals (Price, 1972; Scott, 1977). Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) found that this approach concentrates on control and external focus. Organizations can study different facets ranging from hiring practices to innovative ideas being produced and cultivated when examining groups in the goals model approach to effectiveness (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1998). This model allows groups to be studied on a variety of different levels, but does not offer causal effects. Using a goals only approach to organizational effectiveness may prevent the organization from adapting adequately to changes in the environment as well as changes within the organization itself (Frisby, 1986).

The "System Resources Model" measures effectiveness based on a group's ability to obtain and use scarce and valued resources (Yuchtman & Seashore, 1967). "An organization is deemed effective in this regard if it acquires necessary factors of production such as raw materials, labor, capital, and managerial and technical expertise" (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1998, p. 573). This

approach is best used when a clear path exists from inputs to performance (Cameron, 1986). An athletic program's ability to obtain quality players and coaches would make it more effective under this model (Chelladurai, 1987). The system resources model focuses on obtaining resources therefore more effective groups are those, which gather more resources. The model does not address how these resources are used once obtained, and it concentrates on the number of resources as opposed to the quality of the resources. Additionally, the system resources model's focus on gathering valued resources also ignores the firm's ability to maximize the valued resources (Chelladurai, 1987).

"Process Models" are a class of organizational effectiveness models evaluating the construct based on how individual organizations function. They detail the inner-workings of the different people involved in an organization's effectiveness. "An organization is said to be a healthy system if information flows smoothly and if employee loyalty, commitment, job satisfaction, and trust prevail" (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1998, p. 573). These models explore the organizations outputs, as derived from its internal processes. The process models believe in a clear connection from the group's processes to its outputs (Cameron, 1986; Chelladurai, 1987) therefore process models' approaches to effectiveness struggle to give definitive answers when no clear cause and effect connection exists from the inputs to the outputs.

The "Multiple-Constituency Model" examines an organization's effectiveness on several different levels and from varied perspectives (Chelladurai, 1987). This evaluation method of organizational effectiveness deals with how the different stakeholders view an organization's effectiveness or lack of effectiveness. Different stakeholder groups often evaluate effectiveness differently, which can create conflict within the organization (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1998). Connolly, Conlon, and Deutsch (1980) argued that effectiveness is a plural concept and each stakeholder group has a claim to how effective the organization is. Zammuto (1983) calls this the relativist approach, focusing on an empirical examination of organizational performance and constituencies. Frisby (1986) and Chelladurai (1987) suggest that researchers synthesize these

different approaches into one for a more holistic understanding of a group's effectiveness. Zammuto (1983) presses on the issue of time when addressing organizational effectiveness, because an organization's definition of itself constantly evolves. This model is strong because of its holistic examination of a firm, but it may be difficult to obtain the necessary information from all the different stakeholders to gain a good understanding of the different stakeholders' beliefs and concerns about the organization's overall effectiveness.

The various perspectives on organizational effectiveness from researchers and stakeholders make it a difficult, yet exciting topic for research and debate also allowing for the use of a variety of approaches (Cameron, 1986; Chelladurai, 1987). Because of organizational effectiveness' multi-dimensionality from the "input-throughput-output concept" to the varying areas the different firms operate in, it is a topic specific subject (Chelladurai, 1987). Organizational effectiveness concentrates on an individual firm, while sustained competitive advantage and success compare firms against one another, which needs exploration.

### **Strategic Management**

Strategy is practiced by animals in the wild as well as by people in business and the sport world. As a concept strategy has throughout time been accomplished and researched both knowingly and unknowingly. Strategic management did not gain research attention in the business community until the 1960's (Segal-Horn, 1998), being used interchangeably with 'business policy' (Whittington, 1993). Strategic management focused on an organization's future by examining its products, expanding markets, developing technology and diversifying. These factors remain today, but it encompasses much more (Schendel, Ansoff, & Channon, 1980). "Strategic management can be defined as the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives" (David, 2001, p. 35). Strategic management is about organizations deciding what resources they possess and using them to the group's advantage to be successful.

Chandler (1962) defined strategy as, "...the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for those goals" (p. 13). The first researchers are considered the classical thinkers and viewed planning was an essential part of strategy (Whittington, 1993). They believed organizations should allow managers to place the firm's different resources into position to work most efficiently. The processes employed by management needed to be rational and help the organization achieve a long-term competitive advantage over its competitors. This rational and calculated allocation of resources done strictly by top managers aimed to help maximize the firm's profits (Segal-Horn, 1998).

After the classical theorists, strategic management moved onto the evolutionary theory, followed by the processual viewpoint and finally the systematic view of strategic management (Whittington, 1993). Evolutionary thinkers believed that frequent planning was unnecessary because of the ever-changing markets (Segal-Horn, 1998). Evolutionary theorists stress the unpredictability of the environment, which is the reason they believe in survival as opposed to just the bottom line as classical thinkers do. This is the first step in taking "rationality" out of strategic management. "Rationality" when defined as objective means, applied through scientific procedures, but when defined as subjective, "rationality" is based on less stringently defined actions (Jones, 1998). Processual theorists differ from the evolutionaries because they felt strategy was emergent as opposed to deliberate, while agreeing that long-term planning was of little importance (Segal-Horn, 1998). Processualists further believe that a range of factors lead to a myriad of outcomes, often unintentional ones (Jones, 1998). The processual view sees strategy as coming from top management and uses compromises from the assorted stakeholders (Pettigrew, 1985). Systematic theorists believe strategy is determined through environmental factors and the people surrounding it. Segal-Horn (1998) uses the example of differences from Asian cultural to European culture affecting how strategy develops. Two groups with the same non-human resources will most likely cultivate the resources in

different manners based upon their culture and history (Jones, 1998). Of these four schools of thought the Systematic approach focuses the least on rationality.

The resource-based view surfaced in the 1990's and has become the predominant way of thinking in strategic management. Growing out of the Systematic approach, the resource-based view believes managers have to use their resources to obtain goals and objectives. The simplicity and/or complexity of the resources are determined by management (Segal-Horn, 1998). First-mover advantage (FMA) and the structural alignment of firms within an industry are also important areas covered in strategy literature that can be molded to work with the resource-based view of the firm (Lieberman & Montgomery, 1998; Powell, 1992). The resource-based view, FMA and firm alignment within an industry will all be discussed further.

### **Resource-Based View of the Firm**

The resource-based view has its roots in economics, but is also studied by strategy researchers and industrial organizationalists (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). Economists traditionally viewed three factors when studying an organization's resources. First, labor, is the organization's work force or more simply the people working for the company. The second factor, capital, is the money that a company has at its disposal to perform all of its functions from research to paying employees and buying materials. Land is the third factor, which is not always separated from capital, but believed to be the organization's physical presence. This physical presence may be production plants or office buildings, where top managers are making decisions about the company's future (Wernerfelt, 1984).

Wernerfelt (1984) proposed a broader spectrum than used previously by economists who only examined labor, capital, and land as similarly introduced by Penrose (1959) and Rubin (1973). Penrose (1959) and Rubin's (1973) theories were basically ignored because many of the concepts they discussed did not fit well with the economic models being used at the time. They believed that constructs for modeling needed to be partitioned out more to include items like

technological skill. Technological skill is too abstract to be placed into a mathematical formula with certainty for the outcome (Wernerfelt, 1984). Creating symmetry through the use of preexisting resources and development of new ones is important in the resourced-based view of the firm. Wernerfelt's (1984) conclusions were the springboard for the resource-based view coming to the forefront of strategic management research during the 1990's.

The resource-based view of the firm has developed out of three different theoretical traditions: sustained competitive advantage-based, neoclassical microeconomics, and evolutionary economics. These three perspectives share certain assumptions, but each has a distinct way of examining the resource-based view of the group (Barney, 2001b). Evolutionary economics examines three fundamental principles: variation, selection, and retention. Nelson and Winter (1982) studied the varying routines of different organizations. The less effective and efficient routines are discarded, while the most effective and efficient routines help groups gain a competitive advantage. These routines may be viewed as a group's resources and capabilities, linking it to the resource-based view. Evolutionary economists focus on economic limits when discussing the resource-based view and ignore the strategic planning that takes place within an organization (Barney, 2001b).

Evolutionary economics, transaction cost economics, property rights theory, and positive action theory are different schools of thought within organizational economics using the resource-based view. Evolutionary economists examine the substantive rules used by top management to develop the firm (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). Transaction cost economics and positive action theory use the resource-based view to determine how markets fail. Markets may fail for a variety of reasons from imperfect information to the presence of unforeseen external factors (Dahlman, 1979; Eisenhardt, 1989). The resource-based view works with property rights because as the property rights become more valuable they become more accurate (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992).

Neo-classical microeconomics examines how market forces decide the quantity, quality, and price of goods and services for a given market. Like the resource-based view, neo-classical microeconomics believes that competitors are trying to get the most out of their resources, different groups of competitors are unique in their competitiveness, and how information is used and disseminated is different amongst a group of competitors (Barney, 2001b). Neo-classical microeconomics differs from evolutionary economics because of its belief in equilibrium. If one organization is gaining an advantage or market share than another organization must be losing part of its market share. Neo-classical microeconomics differs from sustained competitive advantage-based theories on the issue of elasticity. Neo-classical thinkers believe that all resources are elastic, meaning the more any resource is needed the more of that resource will be developed or become available. The resource-based view believes that some resources are inelastic because of the time it takes to develop a particular resource, or the causal ambiguity of a resource, or because the resource cannot be bought and sold (Diedrickx & Cool, 1989).

At first glance the industrial organization view and the resource-based view of firms do not go together because the industrial organization approach examines externalities, while the resource-based view considers the internal factors when reviewing organizations (Tirole, 1988). The two are intertwined, however, because "...between the economist's constrained maximization problem of maximizing production given resource constraints and the constrained minimization problem of minimizing resource costs given a desired production level" (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992, p. 371). Mahoney and Pandian (1992) further suggest that while the internal processes of an organization lead to it developing competitive advantage the environmental factors cannot be ignored.

Strategy is often defined as a continuing search for rents, with rents defined as a surplus of returns on a firm's given resources' opportunity costs (Tollison, 1982). Obtaining above-average rents is the basis of competitive advantage research (Porter, 1985). Analyzing rents allows a firm to decipher what resources are truly beneficial in developing a competitive advantage, which

is well seen through the resource-based view (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). Strategy also looks at synergy's role in competitive advantage through the resource-based view. Idiosyncratic bilateral synergy is argued to be the only way a firm can obtain rents through synergy. Mahoney and Pandian (1992) further this contention by discussing how firms must work in this manner for the advantage as opposed to contestable synergy, where the resources are available to all the competitors. Strategy uses the resource-based view to examine a variety of topics from rents to synergy and back to competitive advantage.

Conner (1991) concluded that identifying the differences from one group to the next is an intricate part of the resource-based view. Therefore, examining a basic model of decision-making when working with the resource-based view of the firm is helpful in management (see Figure 4, on the next page). First, the resources must be identified and categorized before being examined for their strengths and weaknesses. Next, the organization's capabilities are determined. In this phase the organization's leaders must determine what they can do more effectively than their rivals. Third, the group looks at its competitive advantage. This is twofold, because they examine the group's aptitude for long-term competitive advantage and then the potential returns. Selecting a strategy that will best use the group's resources and capabilities over its adversaries is the fourth stage. The final stage makes the process cyclical, as stakeholders determine which holes need to be filled as well as ways to improve existing advantages (Grant, 1998).

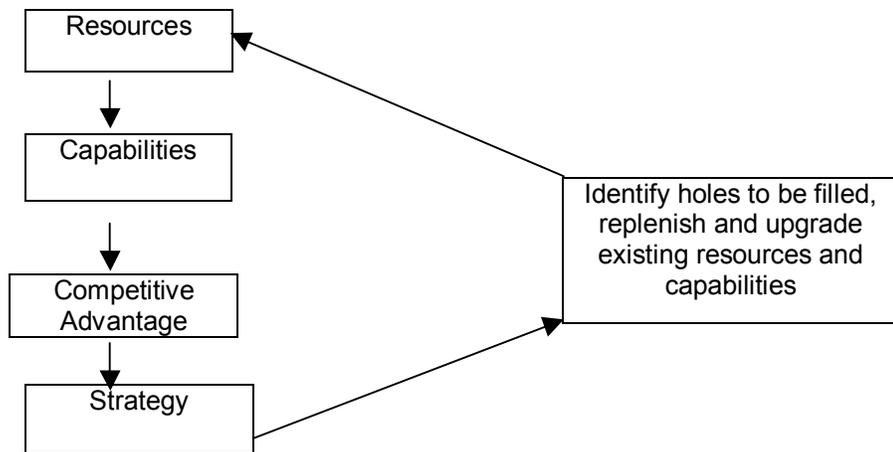


Figure 4: A basic model for the resource-based view of the firm. Grant, R. (1998). The resource-based theory of competitive advantage: Implications for strategy formulation. In S. Segal-Horn (Ed.), *The strategy reader* (180). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

The ability to evaluate the group’s resources and capabilities is paramount to gaining sustained competitive advantage. After identifying the resources and how they best interact for capabilities an organization hopes to make the practices second nature. Nelson and Winter (1982) call it “organizational routine,” and it helps a group flow from one step to the next. The resource-based view allows one to examine an organization’s individual parts when attempting to understand how the puzzle is best put together.

**Tangible and intangible resources.** The ability of an organization to use its resources is critical to its capacity to compete in the marketplace, with the different types of resources, tangible and intangible being instrumental in an organization’s ability to gain a competitive advantage. Tangible resources are concrete and countable items, for example the number of players trying out for the team, or the number of hours the coaching staff spends preparing a game plan. Hall (1992) defines intangible resources as assets or skills. Assets are owned by the organization, for example patents, trademarks or equipment. Skills also known as competencies are even more difficult to define and quantify than assets. Skills and competencies include things like organization culture and employee know-how. One group acquiring another group will be able to take hold of the assets without any trouble, but risk losing some of the skills and competencies the group being taken over possessed (Hall, 1992).

According to Hall (1992) assets fall under one of seven different categories: 1) patents, 2) copyright, 3) registered design, 4) contracts, 5) trade secrets, 6) reputation, and 7) networks. Patenting has been around for centuries and is an agreement between the government and the inventor. Basically, the inventor is granted monopoly powers over his/her invention for a period of time by the state in exchange for making it available to the world at large (Garner, 1999). Copyright is another deal between a person and the government. The deal is struck over an idea as opposed to an invention as with a patent (Garner, 1999). Screenplays and music are examples of things, which may be copyrighted. Registered designs are used for what people see and find “eye-catching.” These designs may be two or three-dimensional and must not have been sold or previously published. Contracts are legal agreements between two people or legal entities. Contracts make the different parties responsible to one another. A trade secret is confidential information, which a firm controls (Garner, 1999). Examples of trade secrets include formulas, technical secrets and know-how. Contracts govern which personnel have access and what they may do with the knowledge they possess. Reputation is what people know and believe about a product or organization. It is built upon fame and esteem; the fame may be bought through advertising or other ventures, but the esteem must be earned (Hall, 1992). Finally, networks are the relationships built amongst the different group members. These relationships are both within the group and with people outside of it (Garner, 1999). All of these different assets may help one organization develop a sustained competitive advantage over its competitors.

Skills are even more difficult to grasp even though everyone knows that they exist within organizations. Know-how is a key skill for an organization to possess if it wishes to maintain a competitive advantage. Furthermore, know-how is not limited to the people in the organization, but includes those who interact with the organization regularly and deal directly with people’s “distinctive competencies,” which Hall (1992) defines as a group’s capabilities that set it apart from others. An organization can be known for its ability to produce a product, but it is that organization’s specifically high quality product that makes

up its know-how. An organization's culture is comprised of its members' beliefs, attitudes, wisdom, and traditions that create a way of thinking and doing things for that organization. Culture is not difficult to learn, but it can be challenging to maintain and transfer from one place to another (Kanter, 1989).

Tangible and intangible resources are both important to an organization's ability to gain competitive advantages over competitors. A hierarchical structure of which resources lead to others or help create a greater advantage is important because a bundle of resources may be attributed to another bundle or be derived from yet another set of resources (Yeoh & Roth, 1999).

**Tacit knowledge.** Hall (1992) defines intangible resources as assets or skills that are difficult to quantify, and because tacit knowledge cannot be codified, and is learned through experience; tacit knowledge is an intangible resource. Explicit knowledge comes from things that others can teach. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) believe that some tacit knowledge may be turned into explicit knowledge, but most tacit knowledge is difficult if not impossible to transfer from tacit to explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge cannot be taught to others by someone who possesses the knowledge; it can only be learned by one's self (Polanyi, 1969). Tacit knowledge may be individualized or learned as a group (Berman et al., 2002).

Individual tacit knowledge as a concept is closely related to skill (Nelson & Winter, 1982). Berman et al. (2002), use the example of a batter being able to hit a baseball for individual tacit knowledge because of the reaction time and anticipation needed to be successful. Group tacit knowledge however must exist in a "collective mind." Eleven players on offense in a football game can be used to illustrate the "collective mind" because any mistake by one member of the group could easily bring down the whole team. Therefore the participants must be able to know their individual jobs, but be able to react to the opposing team as well as their own teammates' movements during a play. Not one member of the group knows every detail of every one else's task, but when performed together properly, the play may be a thing of beauty. Being able to coordinate all of the different parts is acquired through practice (Berman et al., 2002). Understanding

that is dispersed and implanted amongst a group in the fashion of a team or unit must be tacit (Nelson & Winter, 1982). The reason for this is twofold; first, the team members must recognize the pattern simultaneously and begin to perform accordingly. Secondly, none of the individuals involved will be able to describe in detail what other members of the group did to create the success. When tacit knowledge fosters quality performance it should also be sustainable for a longer period of time (Berman et al., 2002).

### **First-Mover Strategy**

First-mover advantage (FMA) researchers work within the field of strategic management, examining the benefits of being the pioneer in a given industry or with a different product. Lieberman and Montgomery (1998) argue that the resource-based view and FMA should be researched in conjunction with one another when possible. While the resource-based view examines an organization's resource acquisition and utilization, FMA tries to determine whether early entry benefits an organization in obtaining resources. Lieberman and Montgomery (1998) believe most FMA literature details pioneering group's ability to grab resources, but that more should be done on the topic and the resource-based view can help fill those gaps. First-mover research is more empirically based than resource-based and can therefore be beneficial to lingering questions surrounding the resource-based view to strategic management (Porter, 1991).

There are several different types of pioneers in FMA research as identified by Golder and Tellis (1993). First, there is the inventor, who develops and/or patents the product. Next, is the product pioneer, who creates the first working model of an invention. Finally, the marketing pioneer is the first to sell the new product. Golder and Tellis (1993) concluded that many pioneers are lost and actual market leaders are given pioneering credit.

Studies concerning first-mover disadvantages and the advantages of followers have only recently appeared in the literature. The research shows that

different types of organizations perform better when entering the market at different times. Organizations that are strong in research and development have a better chance of success when they are the pioneer, while those with a strength in marketing are better off coming into the market as a follower, borrowing some technology and utilizing their ability to push product to gain market share (Lieberman & Montgomery, 1998). Finally, FMA may be dependent upon the product line as well as organization experience in different markets (Mitchell, 1991; Sullivan, 1991).

### **Structural Alignment within the Firm and within the Industry**

The structural alignment of firms in the marketplace may be interpreted in a couple of different ways concerning competitive advantage. First, the group's internal structure may be critiqued, and how it chooses to align with other groups in the marketplace, if it chooses to do so, can be analyzed. Throughout the century organizations have been viewed through the specialization productivity paradigm. Researchers examined how to help businesses run (especially factories) most efficiently. A shift took place during the 1980's away from the specialization paradigm toward a nonlinear dynamic approach to business. The nonlinear dynamic creates a loop because of feedback from one group to another as opposed to information flowing in only one direction. Organizations best utilizing the nonlinear dynamic can gain an advantage over competitors (Istvan, 1992).

The effects of organizational alignment on performance within an industry have been studied for a long time (Powell, 1992). Contingency theorists argue that success is derived from the aligning of endogenous variables with exogenous variables. Powell (1992) showed that an organization could produce supernormal profits based on organizational alignment in conjunction with traditional strategic management factors, like market share and group membership.

It is important for groups to align themselves properly internally to best compete externally, groups may also work in conjunction with others for better positioning. Strategic alliances are voluntary agreements between groups attempting to gain a competitive advantage for the associates (Das & Teng, 2000). A myriad of models have been developed to study strategic alliance from game theory to transaction cost economics. Das and Teng (2000) believe that the resource-based view may prove useful in better understanding strategic alliance, because of its focus on maximizing the value of the organization's resources, compared to the transaction cost belief in minimizing cost. Organizations venture into alliances for two reasons according to Kogut (1988): 1) one group wishes to gain the other group's know-how, or 2) use another group's resources in conjunction with one's own know-how. Examining strategic alliance through the resource-based view can describe how organizations may work together to gain a competitive advantage, as opposed to game theory, agency theory and strategic behavior theory, which have difficulty distinguishing cooperative efforts and solo attempts to gain a competitive advantage (Das & Teng, 1992).

### **Sustained Competitive Advantage**

Gaining a sustained competitive advantage is the main goal of strategic management. Porter (1985) claimed that studying the above-average return rates on resources is the crux of competitive advantage studies. The original focus of work in this area concentrated on external environmental factors an industry's competitors face (Buzzell & Gale, 1987; Porter, 1980, 1985), with an industry's competitors. Black and Boal (1994) reported that these external components explained only a small portion (8% to 15%) of what was happening.

Sustained competitive advantage examines a variety of factors used to determine the resources and capabilities that will lead an organization to realizing competitive advantage. Often these resources are intangible items like, organizational reputation, employee know-how, culture, and consumer loyalty.

Intangible resources are often more difficult to replicate, while at the same time giving the organization the ability to gain tangible resources (Smart & Wolfe, 2000). Money, equipment and human capital are all tangible assets at the organization's disposal. Intangible resources may be catalysts to extra tangible resources, which leads to competitive advantage (Hall, 1992). Sustained competitive advantage is about getting the most out of all the resources an organization has at its disposal.

According to Barney (1991) value, uniqueness, imitability and substitutability are the four main factors used to determine an organization's ability to achieve sustained competitive advantage. Value is defined as the resource's ability to benefit an organization by counter acting threats to its environment. Valuable organization resources will also make the most of the opportunities given to it by the group's position in the marketplace (Barney, 1991). Valuable resources improve a group's efficiency and effectiveness; with raw materials only becoming valuable when they are exploited for the group's advantage over competitors. Valuable resources utilize raw materials to increase an organization's standing amongst competitors, improving an organization's efficiency and effectiveness in two ways (Barney, 1991). First, a valuable resource may exploit an organization's opportunity over its competitors by using technology that only it has available. Secondly, a resource of value may balance threats attacking the firm from the environment (Barney, 1991). Having the proper equipment for a given situation is one way of neutralizing a potential threat.

Rare resources are those, which do not commonly exist among the organizations competitors. Furthermore the rare resource is unlikely to be developed by future competitors (Barney, 1991). This does not mean that shared resources amongst competitors make that resource useless, rather it ensures a sense of competitive parity, which is good for survival (Porter, 1980). The rareness of the resource is not crucial to competitive advantage, sustained or otherwise. The importance of rare valuable resources is dependent upon the number of groups competing, so if the number of organizations possessing the

resource is less than that required for perfect competition dynamics than that valuable resource may create a competitive advantage (Hirshleifer, 1980). Competitive advantage amongst a group of organizations may be achieved even when multiple organizations possess a rare and valuable resource because not all of the competing firms have that resource and use it identically.

Barney (1991) explains three different mechanisms for sustained competitive advantage through “imperfectly imitable resources.” The first one of these is an organization’s historical conditions. Porter (1980) argued that an organization’s unique history is not pertinent to comprehending a firm’s performance, but the resource-based view as described by Barney (1991) believes slightly differently. The history of organizations has long been considered a factor amongst strategic management scholars and those of other disciplines. The social complexity and utilization of resources as they develop is intrinsic for successful groups (Barney, 1991). The Valdosta High School Wildcats football team from Valdosta, Georgia, is an example of this historical concept. The timing, location, people involved from players to coaches to fans and the development of its winning tradition are impossible for others to duplicate. Traditions that develop within an organization will influence a group’s performance and add to the organization’s history.

The second concept to understand about imperfectly imitable resources and its connection to a firm’s competitive advantage is “causal ambiguity,” which means that people know there is a link between a resource and the group’s competitive advantage, but it is not understood at all or is poorly comprehended (Barney, 1991). Causal ambiguity actually helps an organization maintain its competitive advantage, because competitors can only guess at how to duplicate the use of that resource (Lippman & Rumelt, 1982). This lack of understanding of the link between resources and competitive advantage makes it difficult to test (Barney, 1991), increasing the need for obtaining the stories of organizations that develop competitive advantage. Barney (1991) takes causal ambiguity to the next level because he argues that even the group with an advantage cannot completely understand the connection because the people who understand it

could be hired away by another group, develop that resource within the new one, therefore negating it as an advantage for the first group because it is no longer a rare resource.

The third option for imperfectly imitable resources developing is social complexity. The social complexity of an organization is intense because of the myriad of relationships within it. These relationships exist amongst the different stakeholders within the organization as well as how the group is perceived and how it interacts with others (Klein, Crawford, & Alchian, 1978; Klein & Lefler, 1981). Social complexity may be the relationships as discussed earlier or an organization's culture (Barney, 1986a; 1986b). This culture could be how all the employees have upbeat personalities or the dress code for the office. Social complexity may exist for a variety of reasons, which makes it difficult to duplicate by other organizations creating imperfect imitability, but causality may be observed from one group to the next, for example having good rapport with customers, leading to better retention (Barney, 1991; Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997). Barney (1991) further argues that physical technology does not qualify because if one group can purchase it, then so can others and the uniqueness of individuals helps make social structures important.

Nonsubstitutability is the fourth attribute in an organization's attempts to gain sustained competitive advantage through its resources, and means "... that there must be no strategically equivalent valuable resources that are themselves either not rare or imitable. Two valuable resources (or two bundles of firm resources) are strategically equivalent when they each can be exploited separately to implement the same strategies" (Barney, 1991, p. 111). Substitutes are created in a two of different ways. First, one group may copy what another one does, or do something very similar in the same basic manner (Barney, 1991). In sport for example two offenses could use the same playbook; because they use the same offense one is substitutable for the other. The additional way a resource may be substituted is by end results. Barney (1991) uses the example of a charismatic leader's vision for an organization producing the same results as another organization's planning process. While the competing organizations

used different methodologies, the end result was the same, making one approach substitutable for the other. Revisiting the playbook example, the two teams could have different playbooks that both produce lots of points for their team, and it is because they both score lots of points that one is substitutable for the other.

Sustained competitive advantage is at the heart of strategy research, and Barney's (1991) four factors are a guide to negotiating sustained competitive advantage and the resource-based view of the firm. Valuable resources improve an organization's position amongst its competitors as well as combating threats to the organization, which come from the environment (Barney, 1991). Uniqueness or a rare resource is one that does not commonly exist and is doubtful to be developed other competing organizations. Resources' being imperfectly imitable is the third key to sustained competitive advantage and are resources that other groups cannot obtain (Lippman & Rummelt, 1982). Unique historical conditions, causal ambiguity, and social complexity are the three factors creating an imperfectly imitable resource (Barney, 1991; Diedrickx & Cool, 1989). Substitutability is the fourth factor, and occurs when competing organizations have no strategically comparable resource and no other resource can be used to develop a similar strategy (Barney, 1991). Valuable, unique, imperfectly imitable and resources that have no substitutes can create competitive advantage for an organization. This framework is just beginning to appear in the sport management literature, and may be applied to a variety of topics within the field because it looks at the use of resources for organizations that compete against one another attempting to determine why one consistently does better.

### **Sustained Competitive Advantage Research in Sport Management**

Strategic management has always been part of sport, just like it has always been part of business (Slack, 1998). Coaches plan, motivate and use every resource at their disposal to improve their team's chance at success.

Research on sustained competitive advantage in sport management has recently emerged in the field, first by examining sponsorship (Amis et al., 1997). These researchers used the Profit Impact Marketing Strategy (PIMS) framework in conjunction with two case studies. PIMS was used to help determine whether actual profits resulted from the companies' sponsorship of sports and sport teams. One case study involved Owens-Corning and the Canadian free-style ski team, and the other involved MARAP (a made up acronym to protect the company), which had 20% of its marketing budget on sport sponsorship in 1991, but stopped pursuing sponsorships by 1994. The researchers concluded that the resource-based view might allow firms to gain sustained competitive advantage in the marketplace through different approaches to sponsorship. Readers are reminded that obtaining sustained competitive advantage through sponsorships may take time, but can be done by spending lots of money on a variety of athletes and events or forging a long-term relationship with one specific event (Amis et al., 1997).

While athletic programs are not without fault, the argument is often made of the benefits an athletic program, and especially a successful one may provide to its university (Adler & Adler, 1991). A case study by Smart and Wolfe (2000) of the PSU football program and then compared it to two conference foes in four areas. The four areas examined were the football team's winning percentages (for the 1990's), finances (based on home attendance), graduation rates and ethics (based on major NCAA violations). They performed the study because of the increased popularity of college athletics, and athletics programs' abilities to have a positive influence over the university as a whole (Beyer & Hannah, 1997; Thelin, 1996). Smart and Wolfe (2000) concluded that history, relationships, trust and organizational culture lead to sustained competitive advantage for a college football program. Coaching at PSU appeared to have the greatest influence over a programs' success, but Smart and Wolfe (2000) believe that there is more to it than just the coaching staff. Therefore, the resource-based view should be examined more closely in other sports as well as for other sources of competitive advantage. The ability to achieve sustained competitive advantage took time

and might not have been accomplished with different personnel in place.

Connecting the proper resources in the right time frame is critical (Barney, 1991).

Poppo and Weigelt (2000) conducted a quantitative study of free agents in Major League Baseball (MLB). The focus of the research was on the superior knowledge of a free agent's future performance, deemed a resource of value. The data showed that there is not much certainty for owners in a free agent's future productivity. The authors were unsure whether this uncertainty was created by abnormal returns by the free agent, and if team owners can obtain better information or invest by substituting other assets (Poppo, & Weigelt, 2000).

The concept of time as a factor in competitive advantage needs to be further developed, especially in sport (Smart & Wolfe, 2000). Tacit knowledge, for an individual is the possession of great skill, for example, a tennis player's ability to return serves coming in excess of 120 miles an hour. The service returner uses previously gained knowledge to anticipate what is about to occur, finding a pattern is paramount to tacit knowledge. It can then be argued that a team may obtain group tacit knowledge. The repetitions in practice that a football team goes through helps them work as a unit on game days. The players must go about their individual tasks, trusting each teammate to do his/her job so that the team will accomplish its goal (Berman et al., 2002). Group tacit knowledge is the concept examined by Berman et al. (2002), with National Basketball Association (NBA) teams from the 1980-81 season to the 1993-94 season. Wins and team assists were the dependent variables used. Shared team experience, the number of years a player had with a particular team at the end of a given season, shared team experience squared, the squared value of the average shared team experience, and standard deviation of shared team experience, which is the standard deviation of the experience for all the players on a roster for a given season were all independent variables. The control variables used were: 1) average draft position, 2) average age, 3) coaching experience, and 4) standard deviations of age and draft position. Berman et al. (2002) concluded that tacit knowledge when measured by performance variables is positive, but may have diminishing returns. Coaching experience, not quality has its largest

effects when a team has less shared experience. Higher talent levels were also found to positively affect winning percentages. It is important to strike a balance between keeping a group together and infusing it with higher quality personnel to achieve the maximum amount of success (Berman et al., 2002).

Professional sport franchises (PSF) are among the most recognizable business entities in North America. Mauws, Mason, and Foster (2003) examined the ability of PSFs to obtain persistent competitive advantage to their owners. The article focuses on North American sport leagues and teams. Mauws et al. (2003) used both the Structure-Conduct-Performance (SCP) framework, with the “five-forces” model developed by Porter (1979) and Barney’s (1991) RBV approach. The researchers argue that when using the “five-forces” model PSFs are not as good at developing persistent competitive advantage as they were in the past because of industry changes. Other competitors for entertainment dollars and the rising costs associated with player salaries are just a couple of the industry changes mentioned. While PSFs are not as capable of achieving sustained success they are still a good avenue for the business to obtain rents which under the RBV approach to sustained success is valuable to competitive advantage. Mauws et al. (2003) conclude their discussion by suggesting that PSFs are neither businesses nor teams in the traditional sense and strategically speaking should be seen more as corporate.

Professional baseball is America’s pastime and therefore worthy of examination for sustained competitive advantage. Smart and Wolfe (2003) statistically studied MLB over the course of a decade considering human resources and leadership. “Team defense resource” and “team offense resource” were formulas derived from basic baseball statistics to determine individual player contributions. The individual player contributions were then summed to find a team score for each year within the decade. Leadership was considered the on-field manager using the following characteristics to explain his influence on winning: 1) Age; 2) Prior experience; 3) Prior winning percentage; 4) Number of teams previously managed; 5) Number of years managing; 6) Winning manager of the year award; 7) In-year managerial change; and 8) First-

year manager status. Smart and Wolfe's (2003) studied found that the players accounted for 67% of the variance and leadership only slightly more than 1%. Similarly to the Berman et al. (2002), Smart and Wolfe (2003) found quantifying an RBV study in sport difficult.

Sport management does not consist solely of sport teams and franchises, but also other businesses that associate with sport teams and sporting events. Amis (2003) studied Guinness and how the company markets with sport through direct sponsorships, advertising, and on-trade promotions. The study used qualitative methods including interviews, documents, and internal presentations among other sources. Amis (2003) focused his research on the image and reputation aspects of Guinness as it marketed its product through sport. The study determined that image and reputation are truly important to a product's ability to succeed as is how it is managed, especially because of the multi-dimensionality of image and reputation. Furthermore, sports influence on the marketing of a product can be enormous because of the multi-level delivery and reach of sport and sporting events (Amis, 2003).

All seven studies suggest that sport managers should examine the resource-based view and sustained competitive advantage more closely and in different settings (Amis et al., 1997; Berman et al., 2002; Smart & Wolfe, 2002). As sport management continues to develop, the differences between sport organizations and non-sport organizations continue to be a serious question. Slack (1998) strongly urges researches to examine sport governing bodies as well as companies like Nike and Rawlings. Slack (1998) makes this suggestion because of the growth of the sport industry in the past 20 to 30 years. Researchers should not neglect the roots of sport management, but it needs to include the emerging areas of sport management (Slack, 1998). Smart and Wolfe (1997) and Berman et al. (2002), both demonstrate how the resource-based view and sustained competitive advantage can be studied in sport management.

Sport management is often a service related industry (Slack, 1998) creating a need for better understanding of the different relationships between

the people providing the service and those receiving the service. Barney's (1991) sustained competitive advantage framework is a good template for sport management researchers to use when analyzing the industry because of the numerous intangible resources. Sustained competitive advantage allows researchers to better understand what makes an organization thrive without discarding the parts of the organization that are not easily identified and/or understood. Actually this is a focal point of RBV and sustained competitive advantage research (Barney, 1991; Conner 1991). Discovering what practitioners believe is important to an organization gaining competitive advantage is vital to increasing the level of competition, whether it is on the athletic field or in the boardroom. Getting at the heart of which intangible resources will allow practitioners to try and improve those areas within their group.

### **Qualitative Methods Research for Sustained Competitive Advantage**

As sustained competitive advantage research continues to increase with the resource-based view as its oft-used framework, differing methodologies should be considered. Barney (2001a) prefers a quantitative approach to RBV and sustained competitive advantage, but acknowledges that qualitatively examining intangible resources may lead to the discovery of tangible resources. To date, most of the research concerning the resource-based view and competitive advantage has come from secondary data sources (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). Rouse and Daellenbach (1999) suggest using a four-step approach to selecting groups for study in competitive advantage research, with selection of organizations from a single industry, based on secondary data as a critical first step (Miller, Greenwood, & Hinings, 1997). Second, researchers need to find relatively homogeneous groups; whether the groups are similar based on strategies used or the resources they have available to them. Third, comparing firms based on specific indices within the group need to be made. Finally, selecting groups that are at the high and low ends of the competitive

spectrum creates a better comparison (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999), and using groups at the extreme ends of the continuum is especially good for qualitative studies (Pettigrew, 1990).

“Strategic management research has done an excellent job of sorting out the myriad of strategic variables, but an integrative perspective actualized in fieldwork-based or ethnographic-type research would, we think, point to valuable, strategically important factors and social synergies in organizations,” (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999, p. 492). Qualitative methods should not replace the quantitative research being done in management, but rather be used to help obtain the stories of different organizations in various industries. Both methods are useful and beneficial to strategic management (Long et al., 2000). Mir and Watson (2000) argue for researchers to use a constructivist’s approach to strategy research because of the importance of relationships within organizations.

Doherty (1998) presents a model for evaluating organizational effectiveness and human resource management, also calling for more research to be done on these topics. Doherty’s (1998) model calls for researchers to examine the effects of the environment on human resource management (HRM) as well as the internal work environment. The internal work environment consists of the individual, groups, both formal and informal and the organization as whole. The organization’s influence may be felt through more holistic organizational concepts such as structure, goals, resources and culture or by more individualized ones like job design, evaluation and leader behavior. Doherty’s (1998) model shows that these environmental factors produce both affective and behavioral outcomes. The outcomes may impact the individual’s satisfaction or commitment amongst other things or the group’s cohesion or conflict within it. The organization’s effectiveness relates back to its outcomes (Doherty, 1998). This model can be helpful when examining teams and athletic programs because they are comprised of different groups of people all working towards making that team or program successful. Interviewing the people holding the various

positions within the organization may lead to a better understanding of the organization (Mir & Watson, 2000).

Qualitative methods have been under utilized in sport management (Olafson, 1990; Slack, 1996). Researching individual organizations may be useful because scholars will discover the commonalities and differences of organizations in competition with one another and how they handle certain situations (Slack, 1996). Interviewing people about the different tasks they perform for an organization aids in understanding how different organizations gain a competitive advantage (Mir & Watson, 2000).

### **Summary**

Organizational effectiveness, strategic management, and SCA are ways for organizations to analyze whether or not they are getting the most out of the resources that they possess. It is important to remember that organizational effectiveness focuses on the individual group's performance irrespective of its competitors, while sustained competitive advantage and the resource-based view determines how a group is competing with others in the marketplace. The differences are an important note in sport for example, as it contains mechanisms to create/limit "market share", unlike true capitalist industry. This is due in part to the interdependence of different "companies" in sport and the monopolistic nature of leagues. Sport teams and athletic departments may follow similar patterns similar to those of organizations in non-sport industries, because both sport and non-sport organizations are looking to get the most out of the resources, tangible or intangible, human or otherwise, that they possess. The parallels between the different groups may be beneficial, but are not crucial to strategic management. It is important that the know-how and culture of successful organizations become better understood (Hall, 1992). "The assessment of resource utilization is important for future research in the resource-based approach to the firm. Firms may have skills in accumulating and

organizing resources; but these are irrelevant if the resources are not utilized efficiently” (Majumdar, 1998, p. 825).

Sport management is an important area to research SCA through the resource-based view of the firm because of the array of groups which may be examined from sport teams (Berman et al., 2002) to athletic departments (Smart & Wolfe, 2000) to sport sponsorships (Amis et al., 1997). As a service industry, sport management has an assortment of both tangible and intangible resources that need to be examined and the resource-based view of the firm is an appropriate framework because it allows researchers to use a holistic approach when examining organizations.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

This chapter reports the research procedures used to investigate sustained competitive advantage, and the resource-based view of the firm within a sport management setting. The chapter is presented in four sections: (a) Archival Data; (b) Study Sites; (c) Interviews; (d) Observations; (e) Analysis Methods and; (f) Problems of Access.

#### **Archival Data**

Every state in America has an organization that is charged with organizing competition for its state high schools. In Florida, it is the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA). In Texas, it is the University Interscholastic League (UIL), which both have easily accessed websites through a simple “google” search. These websites were instrumental in finding winning programs in the Southeastern United States of America. Two members of the local sports media, who cover high school football, gave further guidance on which schools fit my starting criteria.

After the schools were selected, “google” searches were conducted on the individual schools to look for online information about the schools and their football programs. Many of the stories available were not related to the research at hand, but 54 of stories were related. The stories came from major metropolitan papers as well as local ones. One story was from the USA Today newspaper on the influences of money on high school state championships won

(Brady & Sylwester, 2004). Another story on high school football appeared in *Gentlemen's Quarterly*; it was about high school football's importance to the culture of different areas in the country (Veis, 2004). *Sports Illustrated* did a story on De La Salle High School in Concord, California, published not long before their winning streak ended (King, 2004).

While at the schools conducting interviews, I picked up copies of school newspapers, team programs, and old clippings that the participants were willing to share. The school papers and programs were not filled with an abundance of information that pertained to the study, other than to show the importance the programs play in the schools' collective life.

As suggested by Miller, Greenwood, and Hinings (1997), the secondary data from the state's athletic association was analyzed to determine the appropriate three programs. The three schools chosen were Allentown High School, Johnson County High School, and Metropolitan North High School; these are pseudonyms to protect the actual schools' anonymity. This secondary data also helped to secure programs at the extreme positive end of the spectrum as advised by Rouse and Daellenbach (1999). The homogeneity of the groups was maintained by having schools that are all public, and in the largest classification (all over 1400 total students in the student body), therefore playing under similar rules of competition, and having a similar number of students to draw from to make their teams. Next, Rouse and Daellenbach (1999) believe that the groups need to be compared on specific indices. Many of the factors listed in Figure 2 (page 6) were available through secondary data sources. The number of coaches, community area and player data was collected from school archives, local, city, and national newspapers and public county records found on-line. The other like program characteristics which Rouse and Daellenbach (1999) refer to were gleaned through the various interviews conducted with the different program stakeholders. The four-step approach to selecting organizations to studying sustained competitive advantage in competitive sport is where the data analysis starts (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999).

## Study Sites

Three public high schools were visited to obtain the following information. The first program visited was Allentown High School, a suburban school in the Southeastern United States of America. The second program drawn on was Johnson County High School, a school in a single-school district that is not near any major metropolitan area in the Southeastern United States of America. The final program visited was Metropolitan North High School, which is an inner-city school in the Southeastern United States of America. All three schools are members of the biggest classification within their respective state high school athletic associations. Consequently all of them have over 1,400 students in grades nine through twelve. The following details each of the three participant schools.

Allentown High School was opened in the late 1970's and is part of a larger county school system. The current head coach started as an assistant in the early 1990's and was promoted to head coach two years later because of an unfortunate accident involving the initially hired head coach's death (Roswell, personal interview, 2004). Allentown has won three state championships in the last 20 years and won over 160 games in that time period. The coaching staff has had 10 to 12 members over the last 20 years (Dreifert, personal interview, 2004). Allentown's football team was coming off a disappointing 11-2 season when I visited at the end of the spring semester. Allentown also performs well in other sports, drama and debate, as well as academically, having a higher average SAT score than a vast majority of schools in its state (Roberts, personal interview, 2004). Allentown has different booster clubs for each individual sport that help raise money for different projects involving their specific team. These booster clubs are run mostly by parents of current players and overseen by the head coach for that particular sport. They raise money as well as donating time and money to the program (Roswell, personal interview, 2004). The school is located in an upper-middle class residential neighborhood, with on campus facilities for all of its sports and a county park directly across the street. The

campus is easily accessed by parents and other visitors through the main office; there are no fences or gates keeping cars and visitors in or out.

<b>Allentown High School</b>	
Built—	1970's
Approximate Community Size (current)—	11,000
Socio-Economic Status of Community—	Upper Middle Class
Approximate Size of Student Body (current)—	2000
Ethnicity of Student Body (current)	
African-American—	8%
Asian—	14%
Hispanic—	4%
White—	73%
Other—	1%
Student to Teacher Ratio—	17.1 to 1
Students Receiving Government Assistance for Lunch—	9%
Graduation Rate—	96%
Average Teacher Experience—	14.2
Methods of Data Collection	
Interviews—	3 (principal, athletic director, head coach)
Observation—	1 weight room workout
Archival—	17

Figure 5: Summary of Allentown High School as a participant school in study. Statistics were retrieved from [www.greatschool.net](http://www.greatschool.net) (2004).

Johnson County High School is located over one and a half hours drive from any major metropolitan area, but does have an interstate highway go through the town. The current head coach is in his second year with the school, but won a state championship at his previous school. Johnson County has won 6 state titles in the last 20 years and over 210 games to go along with 12 region championships. The school performs well in other sports, but the football team is the area's passion. The coaching staff has 10 to 12 members on average over the last 20 years (Hamilton, personal interview, 2004). Johnson County's football team lost in the state championship game the season previous to my visiting for conducting interviews and observations during the spring semester and following football season. The school was started in the early 1900's and has been at its current location since the 1970's. It is located outside the town square in an area intermixed with new houses and older ones. The school's adjacent areas are what would be considered middle-class. Johnson County has individual booster clubs for its different sports. The boosters for the football program are run mostly

by parents of former players and townspeople who have resided in the area for many years. The boosters raise money to help the program have what it needs to be competitive (Hamilton, personal interview, 2004). Coach Hamilton has both local radio and television programs to do during the season. The school has practice facilities on campus, but plays its home games at the city owned stadium. The campus is easily accessed by parents and visitors with no gates or fences surrounding the school's campus. The parking lot has an unmanned guard house.

<b>Johnson County High School</b>	
Built—	1970's, school started in the early 1900's
Approximate Community Size (current)—	43,000
Socio-Economic Status of Community—	Middle Class
Approximate Size of Student Body (current)—	2000
Ethnicity of Student Body (current)	
African-American—	68%
Hispanic—	2%
White—	28%
Other—	2%
Student to Teacher Ratio—	17.5 to 1
Students Receiving Government Assistance for Lunch—	40%
Methods of Data Collection	
Interviews—	2 (head coach, and group of assistant coaches)
Observation—	3 weight room workouts, 1 home game
Archival—	22 (school website, game programs, major metropolitan area newspapers, local county newspaper, national magazines and newspapers)

Figure 6: Summary of Johnson County High School as a participant school in study. Statistics were retrieved from [www.greatschool.net](http://www.greatschool.net) (2004).

Metropolitan North High School is located on the outer edge of a major metropolitan city in the Southeastern United States of America. Coach Pappas started as head coach of Metropolitan North in the early 1980's, leading the school to over 150 wins and 4 state championship game appearances, winning three to go along with several other deep playoff runs. Metropolitan North was built in the 1960's and has won state championships in all the major team sports (Thomas, personal interview, 2004). The football team as well as most other athletic programs at the school has no booster club and relies on different

fundraisers and donations from prominent alumni to help obtain program necessities and desires. The coaching staff has averaged eight to ten members during the past 20 years (Pappas, personal interview, 2004). The school's football team finished the previous season by winning the state championship. I visited the school at the end of the spring semester following the program's state championship victory. Metropolitan North is located next to a city park in the middle of a lower middle or low-income tract-housing development. There is a barbwire fence surrounding the school grounds and a parking lot attendant checking all vehicle comings and goings. Metropolitan North has on-site practice facilities, but home games are played at a variety of stadiums, some owned and operated by the county and others by private groups or corporations.

<b>Metropolitan North High School</b>
Built—1960's
Approximate Community Size (current)—14,000
Socio-Economic Status of Community—Lower Middle to Lower Class
Approximate Size of Student Body (current)—2000
Ethnicity of Student Body (current)
African-American—82%
Hispanic—16%
White—1%
Other—1%
Student to Teacher Ratio—27.3 to 1
Graduation Rate—54%
Average Teacher Experience—12.6 years
Students Receiving Government Assistance for Lunch—40%
Methods of Data Collection
Interviews—2 (head coach, athletic director)
Observation—1 weight room workout
Archival—15 (school website, major metropolitan paper, game programs)

Figure 7: Summary of Metropolitan North High School as a participant school in study. Statistics were retrieved from [www.greatschool.net](http://www.greatschool.net) (2004).

## Interviews

Interviews for this study were conducted with a variety of people in various formats. Interviews with coaches, athletic directors and principals were done more formally, often in their offices. Other interviews were done through informal

chats with members of the print and television media. A description of the interviews and informants follows.

**Allentown High School.** The first school visited was Allentown. After receiving authorization from Allentown's district office I contacted the head football coach and principal through email to find out if they were interested in participating in the study. Both Principal Roberts and Coach Dreifert agreed to visit with me and I was given Athletic Director Roswell's contact information by Principal Roberts. I was able to set up interviews with all three men in a two-day span for late April.

Coach Dreifert is a white male in his late 40's or early 50's. He has been involved with coaching football for over 20 years. He has been at Allentown since the early 1990's where he was an assistant coach before being promoted to head coach after the earlier mentioned death of the head coach. We met for a little over an in his cluttered outer-office. Both the outer and inner-office had lots of pictures and old newspaper articles of the program's success framed for anyone who enters to see and read about the program. The interview started with the questions listed in Appendix A, but was expanded based on the topics of conversation as they developed during our time together.

I met with Principal Roberts the following day for almost an hour and a half in his office. He is a white male in his late 40's and has worked in multiple school districts as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, district wide curriculum coordinator, and was in his fourth year as principal at Allentown when we met. The office was extremely well kept and he is a very high-energy man. The interview was started with "Question 1" of Appendix A, but quickly shifted to questions off the interview schedule based on Principal Roberts responses.

The final person I interviewed at Allentown was Athletic Director Roswell, who started as the men's soccer coach there in the late 1970's. He is a white male in his late 50's. Athletic Director Roswell had finished his last season coaching the men's soccer team that year and was retiring his teaching duties, but staying on with the school as athletic director. We talked for close to 90 minutes in a side office just beyond the teacher's lounge during his free class

period. The interview schedule in Appendix A was used at the beginning of the interview, and after those questions had been answered I asked questions based on his responses.

**Johnson County High School.** The second school I visited was Johnson County. As opposed to the formal authorization process of the other two districts, they just ask for a letter on the purpose of my study and who I wanted to interview. After sending the letter to the main office I began trying to contact Coach Hamilton. It took two weeks of daily calls to finally get in touch with Coach Hamilton and set up an interview time. He also allowed me to set up a group interview with two of his assistant coaches, Coach Olson and Coach Stubblefield.

I met with Coach Hamilton in the Johnson County weight room during fifth, sixth, and seventh period of the school day. We talked for over three hours while he worked with the players and picked up his sons at school. Coach Hamilton is a white male in his late 30's to early 40's. He was in his second off-season with Johnson County when I interviewed him in early May. He previously won a state championship at another high school as a head coach as well as being an assistant on the staff of a high school that won its state championship while he was on staff. Coach Hamilton started off our discussion in a different manner than the questions that appear in Appendix A, but was able to discuss similar topics anyway.

Coach Olson and Coach Stubblefield are white male in their late 50's who have been assistants at Johnson County for over 20 years. I interviewed them together in a small office next to the boys' locker room for an hour during their lunch break. They bounced ideas and thoughts off one another almost like they were one person. They explained at the end of the interview that is what often happens when you work together for as many years and hours as they had put in together. I started with "Question 1" of Appendix A, but they quickly led me away from my intended script.

**Metropolitan North High School.** Athletic Director Thomas was the first person I interviewed after receiving approval of my proposal from the county

office. He is a white male in his late 60's who has both taught and been an assistant football coach at the school before taking over as athletic director in the mid 1980's. This was his final year at Metropolitan North before retiring. We met for just over an hour in his office to discuss the football program. Athletic Director Thomas and I covered the questions from Appendix A and then some about the finances involved with running a high school football program and athletic department. He was the quietest and most difficult person I interviewed to get information from when discussing the topic.

Coach Pappas is an African-American male in his early 60's, who became head coach at Metropolitan North in the early 1970's. He had been an assistant and head coach at other schools before going to Metropolitan North. We met in his office for over an hour, even though there was construction going on outside throughout. We started with the first question on the interview schedule, but quickly bounced around to other topics, based on his responses as well as what I had been told by other informants up to this point in the research process.

**Informal Interviews.** I was fortunate enough to know members of the local print and television media and interviewed them on their thoughts concerning high school football and the successful programs that they had covered. Reporter Michaels was interviewed for over 90 minutes around lunchtime at a restaurant closely located to his newspaper's office. He is in his mid to late 20's and has been covering high school sports since he was working on his undergraduate degree. We did not work off the questions in Appendix A, but rather had more of a discussion about what we thought the successful programs in the area have in common and then what we thought we would do to try and build a successful high school program.

I interviewed Newscaster Barnes and Cameraman Jones together one evening over dinner before they went to film coverage of that night's area high school football games. Newscaster Barnes is a white male in his late twenty's and has been working at his current station for four years. Cameraman Jones is a white male in his mid-twenties and has been with his current station for three years. Furthermore, he grew up in the state, therefore having some extra

knowledge about the various programs in the area. The three of us had an informal discussion about what the programs that are successful in the area do versus the programs in the area that struggle to win games each season.

	<b>Person Interviewed</b>	<b>Length of Interview</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>
<b>Allentown High School</b> (late April)	Principal Roberts Athletic Director Roswell Head Coach Dreifert	90 minutes 100 minutes 75 minutes	His Office Side Office His Office
<b>Johnson County High School</b> (early May)	Head Coach Hamilton Assistant Coaches Olson and Stubblefield	225 minutes 85 minutes	Weight Room/His Car  Their Office
<b>Metropolitan North High School</b> (mid May)	Athletic Director Harris Coach Pappas	70 minutes 90 minutes	His Office His Office
<b>Informal Interviews</b> (late August)	Reporter Michaels Newscaster Barnes and Cameraman Jones	95 minutes 75 minutes	Restaurant  Restaurant

Figure 8: Summary of persons interviewed for study.

## Observations

Along with interviews, I did observations of the football programs highlighted in the study as well as other programs. Before I determined which high schools I would use for the study I attended two playoff games of a local powerhouse. I attended weight room workouts at all three of the high schools. Lastly, I was allowed to watch one of the practices at Johnson County during the pre-season after I had interviewed Coach Hamilton and his assistant coaches.

	<b>Type of Observation</b>	<b>Time of Observation</b>	<b>Length of Observation</b>
<b>Allentown High School</b>	Weight Room Workout	Spring/Morning	45 minutes
<b>Johnson County High School</b>	Weight Room Workout Practice	Spring/Afternoon Fall/Afternoon	175 minutes 75 minutes
<b>Metropolitan North High School</b>	Weight Room Workout	Spring/Morning	30 minutes
<b>Other Successful Area High Schools</b>	Playoff Games: LHS vs. FWBHS LHS vs. LCCHS	Fall/Night Fall/Night	165 minutes 160 minutes

Figure 9: Summary of different interview and observation techniques. Also mentioned in Appendix D.

## Data Analysis

This section explains how the different types of data were analyzed in this study. During step three of Rouse and Daellenbach's (1999) model to conducting sustained competitive advantage research, similar indices are compared between the competing organizations. While some of that information was gathered through secondary sources, the focus of this study is on the primary data collected from interviewing the coaches and administrators. After conducting the digitally recorded interviews, they were personally transcribed. Prior to the transcription of the interviews a personal account of the interview was made as an additional data source. Subsequently, the transcriptions and personal accounts were read and the data coded into various topics.

### Data Codes

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The school's region</li><li>2. Geography impacting community involvement</li><li>3. Becoming a powerhouse</li><li>4. Coaching's role in a winning team</li><li>5. Coaches salaries</li><li>6. Similarities to college</li><li>7. Reasons for staying at a program</li><li>8. Importance placed on football</li><li>9. Ethics in high school sport</li><li>10. Having talented players</li><li>11. Money and facilities</li><li>12. Quality of competition</li><li>13. Believing in the program</li><li>14. Helping student-athletes</li><li>15. Size of community</li><li>16. Coaches competitive fire</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>17. Enthusiasm of the fans</li><li>18. Impact of other states</li><li>19. Size compared to other local schools</li><li>20. Area's influence on talent of players</li><li>21. Community's love of football</li><li>22. Community's devotion to a program</li><li>23. Experience of coaches</li><li>24. Preparation meeting opportunity</li><li>25. The influence of luck on winning</li><li>26. The importance of having speed</li><li>27. Importance of off-season workouts</li><li>28. Tradition</li><li>29. Enthusiasm and program pride</li><li>30. Disciplining players</li><li>31. Motivating players</li><li>32. Having players achieve more</li><li>33. Developing relationships</li></ol>
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Figure 10: A list of the codes used while working with the data.

Next, the constant comparative-method was used to better understand the coded data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as modified by Martin and Turner (1986) and Turner (1981). The constant comparative-method consists of drawing connections from one piece of data to another piece of data. The connections of

data points may come from the same interview or pieces of two separate interviews or separate data sources, for example an interview and a local newspaper story, or my personal account and an interview being brought together because they are related to one another. Theories arise out of the noted similarities and differences being recorded (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Pettigrew, 2002).

Furthermore, the coded data was turned into concepts written down as memos (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; McMillan, 2000; Weirisma, 2000). The memos were used to better understand possible theories as well as concepts that emerged from the interviews and secondary data (Martin, 2002). As suggested by Martin (2002) I created memos on not only the connections between data points, but conversations with others related to the topic, as well as the joys and frustrations with the project, because it is important to continually be thinking about the data and the research (McMillan, 2000). Using data already collected to improve the next interview or data collection session is an integral part of qualitative research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; McMillan, 2000; Weirisma, 2000).

The different concepts discussed are those, which were repeatedly discussed by the different subjects. The main concepts are also discussed in more detail throughout each subsequent interview (Weirisma, 2000). The concepts, which emerged most often, were examined more closely, because of their importance to the programs' overall success and ability to gain a competitive advantage over opponents, or inability to achieve these goals based on the information given by the informants. The strategies discussed by the participants and the secondary data collected were compared to Barney's (1991) model of sustained competitive advantage, evaluating the strategies on whether or not the resources provide value, are rare, imperfectly imitable, and whether substitutes exist. As discussed earlier Barney's (1991) model makes the burden on a resource to be considered a source of competitive advantage quite high, because it needs to be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and have no viable substitutes. Additionally, the different schools were compared to one another on how the different resources affect their individual success. Glaser and Strauss

(1967) warn qualitative researchers not to force data into existing theories or models, but rather to try and let the data speak for itself.

### **Problems of Access**

Qualitative research allows researchers insight into organizations (Mir & Watson, 2000), but obtaining the information and having access to the necessary informants can be difficult, especially in an educational setting. The collection of secondary data was not without its troubles, but obtaining access to the desired study participants, was by far the most difficult part of this study. This section will explain in greater detail some challenges that were faced while conducting this study.

Obtaining potential sources for secondary data was not difficult thanks in large part to the internet. The more cumbersome part of working with the secondary data was sifting through the articles to find information pertinent to the current study. Most of the stories in the local papers connected to the football programs were human-interest stories about the players, or reports on the past or upcoming game. Most of the stories concerning the teams in larger metropolitan papers were just short summations of the weekends' games, or previews of the upcoming games. National media coverage concerning the teams used in this study was not about the programs, but rather just a ranking of the team(s) in mythical national championship races. The secondary data sources used in this study were used primarily as background to determine the appropriate schools, and find out basic information about them. Programs gave information on past records and the coaching staff. Online sources with secondary information explained socio-economic and ethnicity questions about the different programs.

Unlike the secondary data source collection, interviewing people working in a high school setting presented hurdles, most notably with regards to access. Every school district had separate forms and requirements which needed to be filled out and mailed to the respective district offices for review. The review

process itself was more time consuming than it was difficult to pass. No school district where I applied turned me away to use a school in its district.

Problems with acquiring subjects arose once communication lines were set up with the participant schools. None of the principals were amenable to letting me speak with individual teachers, or a cross-section of teachers at their schools. The most common excuse was availability due to time constraints, even though I offered to come before or after school, on weekends, and to sit in the teacher's lounge and let the teachers decide if they would sit and talk about the study with me. Furthermore, most assistant coaches were busy working with other teams, or the head coaches knew that they were not going to be retained for the following season and did not want me to speak with them in one-on-one or group sessions. Additionally, the head coaches did not want me to bother the people who work with the booster club, citing stories done in the past that painted a poor picture of the school, the program, and/or the booster club (Dreifert, personal interview, 2004). All of the people that I did get to interview were insightful and friendly, but the data would have been enriched if more access had been granted to people within the participant programs and schools.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS: WHAT ARE WINNERS LIKE?

#### **Introduction**

This chapter begins by describing the characteristics of the participating programs. Next, it explains and defines a myriad of topics that were discussed in the interviews with the different program stakeholders. After transcribing the interviews themes developed through the topics of discussion that were written into memos and constantly compared with newly received information to develop the following concepts as advised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and modified by Martin and Turner (1986). The concepts I discovered are: 1) The money factor; 2) Coaches, parents, teachers, administrators, and other players must set good examples for the athletes; 3) Administrators, coaches, teachers, parents, and athletes must all be on the same page; 4) Program stakeholders must be willing to invest large amounts of time into the program; 5) A program is never finished growing and improving in-season; 6) Successful teams have athletes who achieve beyond their potential; 7) Coaches and players must believe they are going to win; 8) Maintaining a successful program. The preceding concepts will be defined and discussed as resources based on their influence in achieving sustained success.

## The Money Factor

The New York Yankees and other large market Major League Baseball teams are seen to have an advantage as are teams with more money throughout the professional and college sporting world. Does this advantage translate down into the high school ranks as well? Recent stories in USA Today (Wieberg, 2004) imply that money is a very important factor. Yet while everyone interviewed for this study believed that more money is always better, they see it as a necessity, but not impacting program success. The informants and I discussed ways to raise more money, how their athletic programs are not allowed to run a deficit, and how football helps offset the expenses for all of the other sports at the high school. A high school football team needs money to function, but it is not linked to sustained success through my informants.

**Having More Money Is Better, But Not a Necessity.** Every situation has advantages and disadvantages and while none of the people interviewed believed that money made the difference in success versus a lack of success they did agree that having more money was always better than having less as explained by Athletic Director Roswell of Allentown:

Well I would say that obviously money does help. When you can walk in and you've got a booster club that's raising \$100,000 and now you've got a matrix scoreboard sitting up there and now the school is in the process of building a giant press box out there. Umm you've got money coming in... I'll tell you something about the Allentown community, the Allentown community has a little bit of money. I wouldn't say that it's a wealthy community but it's got a little bit of money. I'd say it's middle class.

And every bit that the community can come up with makes things easier on the coaches and so they have more time to devote to the preparing the team. Coach Hamilton from Johnson County explained it in this manner:

Just go downtown to Chili's and say, "Hey, would you like to sponsor our 'super-mascot' test? We'll put your name on the t-shirt." Or will you give us \$500 for awards? But I've always had a touchdown club. They didn't always have a lot of money, like at Lonely Oaks (Coach Hamilton's former high school) we might have had \$4,000 but here you might have \$400,000. You get what you need. You don't need much. Just a couple of t-shirts.

He was emphasizing that money is not the most critical factor in the success of the program. Furthermore, Coach Hamilton of Johnson County was suggesting that if you believe that more money will help the program there are ways to go about raising it.

**High school sport teams have the ability to earn money.** Having money is not the most critical factor to the people I spoke with, but there are ways that an athletic department can raise more because individual school districts and the state government do not give much to the programs. Athletic Director Thomas of Metropolitan North did some simple math on the subject of game day revenue and state and district help to the athletic budget for me:

Have 8,000 people at Trans Prowess Stadium, charge six bucks a head and each school would walk away with \$16 or 17,000, less expenses. It's worse that the county doesn't do anything. We get money for girl's sports to buy equipment and supplies, about \$4,500. And we get some money for stadium rental and security, that's gone after about four games, and that's it. They pay the supplements, and that's from the county. Everything else we provide.

He explained some of the things his school does to raise money for the athletic programs:

We do have strong alumni support. John Smith (former player) sent us a check for \$10,000 to help buy rings for the kids. He was on our team that won in 1996. He also put on a celebrity basketball tournament for the athletic program. The class of '73 gave us a check for \$4,000. We had no idea that they were even doing it.

Soon To Be Athletic Director Morgan at Metropolitan North: We sell candy and bagels and chips. It takes a lot of time to make some money and we don't have time to go hit up businesses and such.

He continued by explaining that most of the money the athletic program receives is generated through the football games. Principal Roberts of Allentown discussed one game in particular at his high school:

When you get to the state championship level like we had and even some regular season games, like when we play Rival High School out here, it's our gate! Next year, when we play there, it's their gate. It's a huge monstrous game. I don't like to throw this stuff around recklessly, but it's all public record, so for that one game it's about a \$50,000 gate. Other schools will go through the season and have half that revenue total.

He reminded me that this game was against the Allentown's biggest rival and that not every game generates this much interest or revenue. Ticket sales and donations are not the only way athletic programs raise money, however, as Athletic Director Roswell from Allentown detailed:

Well they sell lots of ads. Our football program has a lift-a-thon. They have a raffle a car off. They've (booster club) got a connection with (Car Manufacturer), we don't get it donated, but we get it at cost and we raffle that off. I'm trying to think what else besides concessions are out there. It seems like it is a never-ending battle of fundraising to make sure the money is there.

The programs take advantage of every opportunity, such as selling ads in programs and on posters, car washes, raffles, and concession sales to earn as much money for each of the schools different programs.

**Football has to share the money it makes to pay for the departments other sports.** The previous sections on money explain its importance to the program and how the departments try to get more of it. At the high school level football helps feed the school's other athletic programs. Allentown's Athletic Director Roswell, "Our other sports make money from running the concession stands at football games." This is just one example of how the other sports piggy-back off football. Principal Roberts from the same school puts it more succinctly when saying:

It's universally true, universally true at every school; football is going to be the program that brings in the money.

... Basketball doesn't generate nearly that kind of money even at the most successful schools; neither does any other sport. So that sport (football) at every school, not just Allentown is going to be the primary revenue source for all sports. And what it does here is allow everyone to have all of their needs and some of their wants. And so that's the kind of thing you don't want to get too fat and happy, but you don't want to just sit on all that money either. Use it. Spend it.

Athletic Director Thomas of Metropolitan North explains that earning money is not always easy in his school because of its lower socio-economic standing to have people as involved as at some other schools:

We never have trouble with getting people to run the concession stands during football games, but who ends up benefiting from the money earned during the games can be tricky because all of our programs are scraping to get by and could use more.

Football is a giant that helps keep the less popular and weaker revenue generating sports afloat, as noted by Principal Roberts of Allentown:

But it goes beyond basketball, all that being said football is your revenue stream, so when you have a down year in football or two or three in a row you get real lean, real lean, because you can't take the cream off the top.

All those interviewed reminded me that there are many expenses associated with running a high school athletic department, so that while some of the revenue figures sound great, the expenses add up quickly.

**High school athletic departments cannot run a deficit.** High school athletic directors, coaches, and principals are under pressure to keep their programs on, or under, budget. The state and local school districts pay teachers' salaries and coaches' supplements, but other than that, programs get little financial help. Therefore, athletic department have to be self-sufficient and cannot over extend in how they spend. Metropolitan North's Athletic Director Thomas explains the expenses for a football game:

You hope, because it has to cover stadium rental, police, ticket takers. It's all game expense. After that you can look for profit. So

in a game with only 1,000 people you are losing money. And the county will tell you that you have to have a minimum of 11 or 12 police, and they make \$100 an hour. For four hours. It's \$125 an evening times 10 or 12. And the stadium rental for where we play is \$850. The expenses are divided between the two schools. And whatever is left is divided between the two schools.

The programs face challenges with maintaining facilities, paying game day expenses, and maintaining quality equipment, which Athletic Director Thomas of Metropolitan North discussed:

We just got 40 helmets, that's \$4,000. You need more than just helmets. Then when you go to the state championship all you get is travel money. It costs about \$27,000 to go, because when you go to state you've got to take the band.

High school football is the main source of income for a high school athletic department. Remember too, that these athletic departments do not have the luxury of running over budget and having some other department, or government agency make up a deficit.

Financing the football team as well as the school's entire athletic department is necessary. Metropolitan North is the only school without a booster club and comes from the poorest neighborhood, so raising extra money there was more difficult than at the other two schools. Each one of the three schools in this study were able to pay for what they needed, but none of the informants I met with discussed money as leading to the programs sustained success. The rest of the rest of the concepts discussed are believed to have an impact on the different program's ability to consistently win games.

### **Coaches, Parents, Teachers, Administrators, and Other Players Must Set Good Examples for the Athletes**

People of all ages are influenced by those around them; therefore it is crucial that the people surrounding the athletes set a good example for them. Parents, coaches, teachers, administrators, and fellow athletes all have the ability to influence their teammates. A high school's first priority is to educate

students, yet they must also aid in the building of character by teaching lessons of discipline, sacrifice, and hard work (Dreifert, personal interview, 2004; Hamilton, personal interview, 2004; Pappas, personal interview, 2004; Roberts, personal interview, 2004; Roswell, personal interview 2004; Thomas, personal interview, 2004).

**Education must take place in the classroom, on the football field, and in the locker room.** Each person interviewed at all three schools made sure to discuss the importance of educating students in the classroom as well as in life and on the field. Principal Roberts of Allentown summed it up like this:

One thing that we believe to be true here and it's something that I believe in but started before I got here is academics are first and everything else is a close second. The key words to that sentence are the "close second" part. Because the idea is you don't want to devalue those other things, but you don't want to put them ahead of academics either. So we don't.

Making sure that everyone from the parents to the coaches to the students understands this is Principal Robert's main focus. Coach Pappas of Metropolitan North explained it this way:

See if there is a problem in class, then in some shape form or fashion that problem is going to be relayed into a football problem. So we want that taken care of. We don't want to do nothin' football wise 'til you take care of that. You got a problem with a teacher; you go take care of that. You go to CSI center, doesn't matter what time of year it is, it can be the week of the state championship final game, you bust your tail. You gonna take care of that.

Student-athletes must take care of their academics before they are even allowed to perform on the athletic field. Making sure that the athletes take care of their academics is taught early at Johnson County as explained by Coach Hamilton and one of his players:

Coach Hamilton: That [skipping class] would get you sat down for a week. You know about that don't you [directed to one of the players]?

Interviewer: Are those rules spelled out pretty clearly before hand or is...?

Coach Hamilton: I don't know. Is that a rule, or do you just know [directed towards the same player]? Did you ever see that written down or did you just know?

Player Jones: Just knew.

Coach Hamilton: [same time as Player Jones] I think they just know. Well, we tell 'em, but I think they know.

It is understood when you are a member of the team that you do not skip class, not only because the coaching staff will punish you, but also because learning in the classroom is the most important part about being in high school.

The education of the athletes is focused on schoolwork, but there are other lessons to be learned, and from people other than teachers and coaches.

Coach Pappas describes how teammates help one another learn this way:

They're [the superior athletes] the pace setters. They become the visual picture. Now I can see what a great athlete does. I can see the form of a great athlete. I can see the dedication of the great athlete. I can see the commitment. I can see the mental preparation of the great athlete. In most cases if that great athlete is not around, psychologically you can't prepare what you don't know. If I take a camera and flash a picture in the air, I'm going to get air. But if I focus on something, then that's what I'm going to get.

The less athletically gifted are able to learn from the more athletically gifted players by just being around them at practice and in the weight room. This allows them to learn and be better through associating with the better players.

Coaches are involved in teaching the players. They believe that coaching and teaching are very similar and must be communicated properly. Coach Pappas of Metropolitan North talks about impressing upon the student-athletes, "... that consistency in doing right things gets right results." He and his coaching staff work on positively reinforcing the players and having all of them do drills, lift weights, and act in the hallways in the proper way. Coach Hamilton of Johnson County explains how he and his staff communicate to the players after each practice:

Well one thing we do is at the end of practice we bring them up into a big circle like every other team in America, then we have all of our

coaches around the back, like every other team in America, but what we do is give every coach the opportunity to say something. It may be two seconds or two minutes, whatever he wants to say. It can be about whatever might be important that day, it might be about God, it might be about algebra class, it might be about playing the defensive tackle. Whatever you want to talk about, that's your time. My assistant coaches get to talk everyday. Now what's funny, and we don't plan this, but it seems like everyday we end up talking about the same thing, 'cause it's something about how practice was and then maybe a lesson to go with it. Like if we had a bad practice because we lost a game, everyone might talk about adversity that day. Now we don't ever go over what we're going to talk about, but it just seems to be a common thread. And then the lessons are taught based on how practice was. You know, when you let 11 coaches talk everyday there are some good lessons goin' on out there. Or you know, he may never remember a word I say, but he might remember somethin' that coach said, see what I'm sayin'? If you all feel the same and you all communicate it, and you communicate in different ways, different learning styles, different teaching styles. The more people you have sayin' the same thing, that's good.

This quote shows an understanding from the head coach that all of his players are not robots and will respond to different cues, so he allows all of his assistants to try and help teach and explain the lessons necessary for his team to be successful. Athletic Director Roswell of Allentown sums up the importance of educating best when talking about the coaches his school hires:

The principal is going to do everything he can to hire people that are good teachers that are good people that this coach wants as assistant coaches as long as they fit the criteria to fit into our schedules, and not just to be a body. We don't just want bodies in the classroom, we want good, we want excellent teachers.

According to the informants, coaches and players help one another learn about the game, academics, and life.

**Parents, teachers, coaches, and administrators must work together to build the student-athletes character.** A person's character may be defined in several ways, but the people interviewed for this study spoke primarily of discipline and work ethic. Teachers, coaches, and administrators believe that the student-athletes learn these traits not only through explanations, but probably to

a greater extent through actions. Therefore, they believe it is their responsibility to not only to talk about the different situations facing the youth, but to lead them by example in their own lives as well.

Instilling discipline to the team seems to be paramount to the success of these high school football programs. The discipline discussed by the informants includes showing up to practice and classes on time, time management, and working on the proper skills and concepts at the proper times. Coach Pappas from Metropolitan North explained it this way:

Well basically discipline is for us is doing what you are supposed to do. And this is not my definition or opinion of this, I borrowed it or copied it from Bobby Knight, "Doin' what you have to do as well as you can all the time." And that kind of applies to all situations. And it, bein' an athlete in our school, we're not just concerned about the athleticism we're concerned about the whole kid. Because invariably that's what it ends up being; a dependable kid is going to be dependable in the classroom, is going to be dependable in the hallways is going to be dependable on the football field. An irresponsible kid is going to be irresponsible all the time. I think it has a lot to do with the make-up.

Coach Hamilton of Johnson County follows a similar description of discipline based on the one rule he has for his players, "Be where you are supposed to be; doin' what you are supposed to be doin', when you are supposed to be doin' it." This makes it simple for everyone involved with the team to know what is expected of them and how they are going to be treated. Coach Hamilton explains further by illuminating on the topic of being a role model to the players:

You model it. You just have to model it and talk about it, but you got to model it. You know, if you tell them don't go out and drink beer, but every weekend you're at the tavern, they'll know.

This demonstrates that coaches are known in their communities and players and parents find out the good and the bad, so it is important that the coaches conduct themselves accordingly. The players will act based on those leading them and Principal Roberts of Allentown discussed this from a previous school he worked for that had a struggling program:

When I started I was an assistant basketball coach and we had won two straight region championships and the coach that I was

the assistant to was a young just out of college type, so he moves on. And the person that came in behind him was very very different in his style and approach. He didn't earn the confidence and respect of the kids or the parents... They did however begin to learn to lose and the leadership at the top was not strong. The head coach would be telling them dirty jokes at practice. And I was sort of disgusted. So it didn't take me long to back out of that and say I'll wait for another opportunity because I can't respect the coach either.

The basketball program Principal Roberts worked with fell off dramatically because of a change in leadership; it failed to teach the student-athletes proper ways to prepare and work, furthermore it failed to set a good example.

The informants described how discipline links to a certain work ethic that is necessary to be successful. The ideal of work ethic concentrates on putting forth a great effort at every opportunity, whether in the weight room, at practice, or during games. Athletic Director Thomas from Metropolitan North told it this way:

We used to call it the blue-collar work ethic. You come to school, you come to practice on time and you do your job and you do it well. And leave and come back and do it the next day. They work hard. The weight room is open year round. And the kids, in order to be on the team must be in the weight room, either through classes or after school. If you don't lift weights you don't play.

Coach Dreifert of Allentown explains the importance of hard work and a good work ethic in the terms of maturity:

There are certain grounded principles that I believe in and one is there are no short cuts to it. It's about hard work, and it's always about sacrifice. Now we have a great definition of maturity around here. People define maturity in a lot of different ways; we like to think about it like this: Maturity is the ability to postpone pleasure. And if you're not willing to do that and you know that really fits in every situation. I don't care if it's in your college life, your high school life, whatever, church life, you know if you can't see maturity in that respect and you have a math test, but they're going out to eat pizza, so I'm going to go out and eat pizza and fail the math test then you ain't gonna be out on the football field. You won't be doing anything extra curricular.

The added importance of this definition is that it explains the consequences of a student-athlete's actions in easily understood terms. Athletic Director Thomas of Metropolitan North gives an example of the penalties for not following protocol and how the proper work ethic leads to success:

Well if there is a game on Friday and you miss practice during the week without being excused, you don't dress. Doesn't matter who you are. The two years we won the state championship back-to-back, we had the same quarterback. In four years he missed one practice. So the kids know they have to be here, and practice does make perfect.

Working hard extends to the parents according to Athletic Director Roswell of Allentown, "...they have a blue collar work ethic and they're not afraid to roll their sleeves up a little bit, and get out there and dig ditches, do whatever has to be done." This bombards the student-athletes from all sides, coaches, teachers, administrators, and parents, on the importance of displaying discipline and working hard to achieve goals.

Parents, coaches, teachers, administrators, and fellow student-athletes all have the ability to influence what team members do, and at these successful programs they take that responsibility seriously. The various groups that influence the team members stress education in the classroom and on the field along with a high quality of character on and off the field through both actions and words.

### **Administrators, Coaches, Teachers, Parents, and Athletes Must All Be On the Same Page**

People with a common bond or thread work better together. According to the informants, in high school athletics it is crucial that all of the different program stakeholders—players, coaches, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community—understand their roles in leading the program to victories. It starts with a shared philosophy of working with the student-athletes, continues through the different stakeholders understanding the influence they hold over a program, and concludes with everyone understanding and embracing the part they play in helping the machine roll onto more victories.

**There Needs to be a Shared School Wide Philosophy.** At every program I visited, informants talked about having people on the same page, sharing a philosophy, and/or working together as one. The philosophy may be how to work with the athletes or it may be larger than that as a way to live one's life, or simply giving support. Johnson County's Coach Hamilton put it in these terms:

The first thing is you have to have support from above. Whether your above is the superintendent, school board, the principal, whoever your above is has to be on the same page as you. Now, that doesn't mean that they have to give you everything you ever ask for, but it does mean that they have to have the same philosophy and trust you enough that when you say something is important they believe it's important and then they try to make it happen for you.

He understands that he will not get everything he wants, but he knows that at least his superior will attempt to help him, and support him at every opportunity. Athletic Director Thomas of Allentown talks about consistency in the philosophy with his school's football program:

The same philosophy carries over year to year. And kids in the neighborhood look forward to playing for the coach. It cuts down on the number of kids who might transfer looking for a more successful program. They stay here rather than going somewhere else. Also, a lot of his assistants played for him. So you have the same philosophy right through the staff.

Keeping a consistent philosophy throughout the staff is also important to Principal Roberts of Allentown as explicated here with an unsuccessful head baseball coaching candidate:

We're going to be a family, or you can't come here. We had somebody, we had a sense he was trying to negotiate a little too hard about how much money he could get and what the booster club could do, and well they just took themselves right out of the running. They really were a pretty interesting candidate on paper. I think they might of done a good job, but there seemed to be too focused [points to himself] here as opposed to the community. The idea is, well I understand people wanting to take care of themselves, but we're more interested in about them taking care of kids. This is an awesome responsibility and if we feel like they're

not going to be able to work well with that community then we can't hire them.

At Allentown High School they focus is on the student-athletes and assume the rest will take care of itself for the coaches. Focusing on the student-athletes was a common thread amongst all of the programs I visited. Coach Dreifert described the philosophy at Allentown the same way as his principal and his athletic director, "Academics are first and everything else is a very close second." Everyone I talked with believes that it is important to do things the right way, as described by Athletic Director Roswell:

Every sport is going to be different in the things you are looking for, but obviously you want to find somebody [coach] that is morally and ethically sound. Somebody who is not going to violate any rules. We're in a teaching environment, so you want someone who is going to be a great teacher.

The people in charge need to be moving in a positive direction, so that they can help those under their influence do the same thing.

**The people hired to work in a program have a powerful influence over the program.** As discussed earlier, the student-athletes and parents are neither blind nor stupid and will be able to see if a coach, teacher, or administrator is doing something different than they say. Therefore, they believe it is important that the people in charge, especially head coaches, have a vast skill set and understand how to use those talents to help the program succeed. Allentown's Athletic Director Roswell talked about his coach at several different points, explaining the different hats the head coach has to wear: 1) He has to head the booster club; 2) He has to have a little preacher in him, the ability to inspire; 3) Needs to be self-confident; 4) Friendly, but not too approachable; 5) Coach his assistant coaches; 6) Well organized, even if it is not apparent to an outsider; and 7) A great teacher. Coach Hamilton of Johnson County explained his role this way and that the players understand it, too:

Just like this, I'm the scout, I'm the dean, all that. Now I don't sit there and say that ain't my job. If it deals with the Johnson County football team, it's my job. When they're getting bad grades, it's going to come back on me. I'm not goin' to pass the buck.

... I got this from Pat Dye and I think it's pretty good, someone asked him how he was going to coach his football team and he said, "Well, I'm gonna love 'em a little bit and we're gonna discipline 'em a little bit." See because if you give them all love and no discipline, you're gonna have a loose team and never get anything done. If you give them all discipline and no love, then you're gonna have kinda like poor morale and you gotta give 'em some of both. Now we're hard on 'em, but we love 'em. And you can ask them, "Why are you doing that?" And they'll tell you, "Because you love me coach."

Athletic Director Thomas from Metropolitan North characterized Coach Pappas' influence over the program this way:

He imposes his will. We had a coach in the 70's who completely turned the program around. We were state runner's up in 1976 and won it all in '77. Then after '77 he left to coach in college. His personality was the mirror image of our present coach. Very dedicated, very strict with the kids, believed in the weight room. We didn't really have a weight room 'til he came around.

The head coach's stamp is all over the program and he uses his influence efficiently and wisely to get the most out of everyone involved.

**Players, coaches, parents, and administrators understand and embrace their roles within the program to help it succeed.** All of the stakeholders are an important cog in the machine of a high school football program. The key to helping that program run smoothly is to get the many parts of the machine into their rightful places. The head coach uses his many talents to help put the players, booster club, and assistant coaches in the right spots.

Coach Pappas of Metropolitan North talked about it in this manner:

Exactly, say we put a 300-pound lineman at flanker; it's not that he can't play out there, but the likelihood of him being successful, because of the things that are required of that position is limited. But if we put him where he belongs, where he should be, then his success ratio goes way up. In terms of..., I'm in the right place doing the kinds of things I'm capable of doing.

Athletic Director Roswell from Allentown talked about the head coach being honest with the players and their roles, too:

I'll tell you what to me that is a critical factor, a critical factor in success of a team. Letting a kid know what their role is and how they get there. And if you do they accept that and move with it.

Additionally, Athletic Director Roswell of Allentown discussed a coach putting other stakeholders in the right role in a program:

...but it is like another team for the head coach to coach. You know those are people who have strengths and they have weaknesses, and you gotta put those people in places that work towards their strengths. You know the president of the booster club has got to be a leader. The treasurer has got to be able to handle money. Everybody has got their jobs, the things that they do. The salesmen are out there selling ads, and they have to be people that are good at that. And so the head coach is really the one for making that organization go. Not doing it, but but setting those people in place who can operate that and run that. So you've got to find out what are his skills as operating a club, where he feels, or what he thinks his role would be in operating that club.

The coach has many people who want to see the program do well and it is his responsibility to see that these different stakeholders—players, assistant coaches, parents, and boosters—are put in right spots to help keep the organization successful. The head coach keeps everyone working towards the same goal, under the same philosophy by putting them in roles that suit their skill sets.

High school football programs are complex organizations that need multiple stakeholders working together to operate successfully. Therefore, since it is often the head coach who is on display, he must work to keep everyone involved working under the same philosophy and embracing their roles under his influence.

### **Program Stakeholders Must Be Willing to Invest Large Amounts of Time into the Program**

There are a couple of different common colloquialisms, the first is, "If it was easy, everyone would do it," and the second is, "Nothing worth having comes easy." Both of these sayings help explain the importance of the dedication and the time that must be put into a program in order for it to

continually succeed. Coaches and players work diligently not only at practice, but also in between practices by going over game tapes and preparing for the next game mentally as well as physically. In addition to spending time, experience from past situations helps prepare and lead to success in future ones. According to the informants, programs are rarely successful during inaugural seasons.

**Spending time watching past games and preparing for future ones.**

Coaching a high school football team is not a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday job. The coaches often have to immerse themselves in the program in order to achieve the success they dream about obtaining. Moreover, the coaches have to continually find ways to improve themselves. As described by Athletic Director Roswell of Allentown:

The coaching staff puts in tremendous amounts of time. I mean they are up here, obviously with practice, and then they are planning practice sessions. They're within the practice sessions out there for two to three hours a day. Then they review, and set the course for the next day, of which the head coach is in charge of that. Then they are out there all day Saturday and at least half a day Sunday. Sometimes even more than a half day on Sunday. You have to have a bunch of people who are willing to put the hours in, people who are willing to improve themselves, by going to clinics, every clinic they can get their hands on. They are willing to up and go to other places for spring football practices. They have to go and talk to other people in an attempt to improve themselves.

Johnson County's Coach Hamilton explained to me that he has a football family. His wife and children are also in love with the game, traveling to road games and watching game and practice tapes that he brings home with him. Athletic Director Roswell from Allentown and I discussed what he tells potential coaches during an interview in regards to the time commitment:

AD Roswell: And it all comes down to the amount of time; you know you can talk about their time schedule. You can ask them what they would do during the week. Have them lay out a plan on how they would do stuff during the week. What kind of hours do they want to work, do they work weekends. You know and find out about those coaches, to see if they are willing to put that kind of time in. And then in an interview you also tell them that that is the

expectation. You let them know after they answer that the expectation is whatever is necessary is what we expect you to do.

Interviewer: Right, if you can get the job in 60 hours and you're doing a good job that's great, but if it takes you 80 then the expectation is you will do that.

AD Roswell: Exactly.

Coaches are not asked to put in a specific number of hours, but are asked and expected to do what it will take for the program to succeed.

The coaches are not the only ones putting in long hours. Players also give up time to make the team and program stronger. Coach Dreifert of Allentown told me what his student-athletes do:

We were able to get this new technology for the start of last season that allows us to digitally record everything. Now all of our film can be put on the computers and we can cut it up Saturday and give to the kids to watch at home. They bring in a disc and we download what we want them to look at and review and they take it with 'em to the house. It works lots better for us.

Not every program has this technology, but there are other ways for players and coaches to prepare for games. So it is not just the coaches reviewing game tapes, but the athletes as well working throughout the week getting ready for next week and learning from the past ones. Coach Hamilton and his staff at Johnson County were at school for agility drills every morning at 6 a.m. with the players if the student-athletes hoped to be part of the team in the following fall, putting both players and coaches at the school for a minimum of nine hours a day. The nine hours includes time in the classroom, not just time working on football. Athletic Director Roswell from Allentown talks about putting in the time this way:

And I would say what we have learned; the only way to get it is you've got to work your butt off. You've got to work longer, harder, and more than anybody else. You keep increasing increasing and the coaches and players are looking around believing that there is nothing more they can do until something pushes them over, but it's work, it's work ethics.

Coaches and players making a time and effort commitment to the program is rewarded in the end at the programs I visited.

**Experience is a great teacher.** Expertise comes with familiarity in a subject or event, and coaching a football team fits this concept. It is important for a football coach to learn from each experience and event that is set before him and use it to grow and become better for the future. Metropolitan North's Coach Pappas explains how a long history in the game has helped him:

Exactly, but then it becomes an easy task because you can't turn to nobody, because everybody knows. You know I've been here 31 years. Who you gonna tell your father, I probably coached him or one of his friends. Your brother I probably coached him. Who your neighbor? You been here any length of time you know what our program is about, and it doesn't change. It doesn't change. It's the same now as it was ten years ago. New kids come in our program, when kids come into our program, when they step onto the football field they know what our philosophy. They know our philosophy.

Because the time a coach has been with a program helps instill the philosophy, they may be tied together. When the students and coaches know the philosophy of the program coming in because it is established over time, like at Metropolitan North, it is easier to execute and keep the program running. Coach Pappas of Metropolitan North talks about experience in another way through the time and work that the players put in for the program:

Make everything consistent. Everyone works out here at our school. If you have money and can get the finest weight training person in the country, which would definitely benefit us by making you stronger. You can't take advantage of that situation, so that your teammates and coaches will gain from knowing. Someplace else there is an unknown, there is uncertainty and as uncertainty there is a distrust. And we go back to that comfort zone. If I know where you are, I know your breakin' points because we... Yeah, you might be stronger there, but it doesn't foster the kind of team that we're trying to build. You need to; I need to know how much I can count on you. I need to know your breakin' points. I need to know your weaknesses. I need to know your strengths. And the only way those things happen is through association.

This association comes through experience working together. The trust builds confidence in one another. Experience is a great teacher and very useful in the time it takes to build a program.

**Building up a program does not happen quickly.** Closely related to experience is the fact that dynasties don't emerge overnight, but rather take time to grow and build. According to Coach Pappas a coach usually has to take a step back before being able to move forward as this part of his interview explains:

You gotta back up. If you ain't goin' no place. If you're spinnin' your wheels you ain't goin' no place. You gotta get on solid ground, and then you'll know where you're goin'. One of the things that I have been a part of and observed is I observed that in other programs. On all levels. It is very unusual to go in with the same level of success as initially that you do down the road, that you have down the road. Because the change of guard, a change of discipline, change of philosophy, a change in the way you do things. All of those things impact the program.

Going backwards is not supposed to be the permanent track. He continued talking about how the administration also needs to show some patience:

And any job I was hired on before I was on about the same plane in both situations, it was just in one job it was necessary to win right now and in the other job they were patient and said they were looking beyond right now. And I was given time to grow the program, and I think that is probably one of the greatest assets. My being here over the years has given my program the opportunity to fester. Because now, basically as I indicated earlier people come into the program knowing what is required.

The patience of the administrators allowed him to develop the program into what he thought would work best. Coach Hamilton of Johnson County talks about a program that has had time to grow in the minds and hearts of the players and the community in this manner:

The thing here, is a lot of it is tradition. These kids growin' up, knowin' about the success and then wanting to write their own chapter. Not everyone's got that, but we do.

Traditions are built throughout a program's history, and having experiences and an understanding of a program's history to lean on help programs continue to succeed. Metropolitan North's Athletic Director Thomas tells me more about this point:

Coach Pappas has been around a long time now. Most of his assistants are former players of his. They were here when he first got the ball rolling so they help teach the kids what it takes to win. And they remember the time and effort they put in to win. The assistants trust him because they have seen him win so much and work so well at one place for a long time.

Programs need to be given a fair amount of time to work out any problems and develop a system. It often takes time for a coach's system on how to do things the right way to take hold within a program, but once it develops, success often follows.

A program is built over time by the people who support and work for it. Parents, boosters, and community members often dedicate man hours to go along with money to help a program be successful. Principal Roberts explains how this takes place at his school:

That's [on-campus stadium for all home games] the field of the dream. And at the end of every soccer match the announcer reminds the parents to hang around and help keep the stadium clean. They don't just show up, "Oh, I'll right a check for that." They believe that it's their house, their home, their field, their kids. So when their kids finish here they don't know what to do with themselves because of the extra free time, so I'm going to stay involved. It's pretty nice, that kind of thing, that kind of ownership in a community based school. If you can involve people and they embrace the work and see the success, it really means something. We didn't buy the success, we worked for the success.

Not just the football team, but other sports at the school get involved with making the stadium the best they can with time and money, which brings home the feeling of belonging and ownership.

Successful programs do not happen all of a sudden. According to the informants, it takes the hard work of everyone involved in the program to keep it going. The coaches and players both put in long hours during the season and off-season in an attempt to achieve their goals. Parents, boosters, and community members also experience the games and work on the facilities; giving them a stake in the program. Therefore, they want it to be the best it can be.

Time spent, patience and experience all help a program reach sustained success.

### **A Program Is Never Finished Growing and Improving In-Season**

Programs that continually win games and championships stay sharp mentally, always focusing on having the proper attitude. According to the informants, players are concerned about growth as a team and a program, but they are also focused on becoming better as individuals, which ultimately will lead to team and program success. Programs succeed because they finish what they start, are always trying to improve on the personal level and work to get every advantage possible to achieve those goals. There is a focus on the here and now of making the present situation as proficient as possible.

**There are finish lines to everything.** When players are lifting weights, running drills, and in practice they need to complete the task at hand. Johnson County's Coach Hamilton explains the importance of not loafing through drills, which he calls finishing:

This, we had 6am workouts going on in the winter. They had to come in before school and get an hours worth of agility work in the gym. And every drill we did there had to be a finish line. So if we're going over bags then we put a cone five yards past that for them to sprint to at the end. There was always a finish line. See they weren't finishing, they would just go through the drills at half-speed and stop. Everything had a finish line. Everything was about finishing, and it still is. You've got to finish your sprints, you've got to finish your sets, you've got to finish your homework. You've got to finish.

Finishing is important in everything that takes place because of the direct impact it has on game days as explained by Coach Pappas of Metropolitan North:

And that [improvement] is something that we have to approach on a day to day basis. There's not a day we don't go in there that we don't talk about things that are going to be game deciders. Finishing a workout. Being able to reach a new level as often as you can.

The importance of finishing workouts and improving and reminding the players everyday that what they do now will influence what happens on game days.

**Coaches and players must want to maximize their potential and grow as individuals.** Continual improvement through the year is great, but having it show up on game days is important according to my informants. All of the preparation and classes are not worthwhile if the preparation does not appear on Friday nights through game performance. Allentown's Coach Dreifert explains how members of his coaching staff must continually improve to help the program succeed:

There are three kinds people I'll never hire.... A guy that only does what you ask him to do. That's the extent of his... what he's going to do for you. There is no initiative for that person; okay he's just there. He does what he's asked to do, but that's it. Regardless of whether he does a good job or not you don't hire that person, because that person is not going to grow you. Your staff has to grow you. You have to interject thoughts and you have to grow each other. And you have to continue to work on you. And you can't go status quo. It's easy to do; it's easy to have a measure of success and rest.

Improvements must happen weekly, if not daily, in the competitive world of football. Mistakes are tolerated, but they need to be learned from and not repeated, as Coach Pappas of Metropolitan North discussed:

We want you to maximize, and it does not matter what your contribution is as long as it is the maximum. Every football team will have an outstanding player and one that you can't measure what he does, but he is a difference maker.

It is important for players and coaches to strive for their best at every turn so that come Friday night they achieve at that level.

**Program stakeholders will work to get everything within their power to help the program succeed.** It is important that a program give itself every possible chance to win on game nights, and this can take place in several different fashions. Allentown's Athletic Director Roswell explained it:

The principal is going to do everything he can to hire people that are good teachers, that are good people, that his coach wants as assistant coaches as long as they fit the criteria to fit into our

schedules, and not just a body.... If he comes to us and says we need this and this and this; we're going to do everything we can to do what that coach is telling us to make that program, his program or hers successful.

They are not going to bend rules, or sacrifice their principles, but they want to help the program succeed on game days too. Athletic Director Roswell of Allentown continues discussing helping the program's success through booster clubs leaving legacies, not just pampering the current players:

And one of the things we do, we want each club to have a legacy here at Allentown. Not to give kids things. That's not important. Okay, you might give them a bag to carry things in or sox, or hats for baseball. Those things are needed. But just to give them all sorts of shirts and paraphernalia is not what we're looking for. What we're looking for is, like our baseball boosters who have spent who know how many 100,000's on the baseball field. And that's a legacy that is left because people are able to see that.

Leaving a legacy breeds pride in former contributors and entrusts a responsibility to current boosters and team members to live up to the past.

For this study, a program must win on game days to be considered successful. According to the informants, the way it wins is through constant self-improvement of both players and coaches. The people involved finish everything they start, whether it is a workout or cleaning up after a game, nothing is left undone. Finally, the program needs help in getting everything possible to set it up to be successful on game days.

### **Successful Teams Have Athletes Who Achieve Beyond Their Potential**

People in sport want to peak at the right point of a season because it means they are achieving at their highest level when it matters most. According to my informants, successful teams have quality high school athletes to compete, and then motivate those athletes to perform at peak levels. There are a variety of ways that the coaches, administrators, parents, and fellow teammates can go about reaching a level of achievement that they may not have known was possible. Motivating average high school athletes into being good high school

athletes and motivating quality high school athletes to an even higher level leads to a successful program.

**A program needs to have good high school athletes.** When starting this study, I was interested to find out how many of the players from these successful football programs went on to play college and professional sports. This interest was based in the assumption that the better they were later on the better they would be at the high school level, too. While this may be true, having only one or two superstar high school athletes is rarely going to win a state championship for the program. Moreover, the percentage of high school athletes that move on to play at the next level is a small number of the total who participates. Johnson County's Coach Hamilton made these comments in our conversation:

Coach Hamilton: Number two, you've got to have good athletes, there is no way around it. Now you can build good athletes. We're building them right here [we are in the weight room during a weight training class]. These are all freshmen, so we're going to build them, make them bigger, stronger, faster, and tougher. You gotta be able to build, but you've got to have good players.

Interviewer: Does it translate to the next level?

Coach Hamilton: No, oh no! High school players, it doesn't translate at all.

The players need to be talented and willing to work hard, but they do not all need to be headed for the NFL. Coach Pappas of Metropolitan North picks up on this point and adds:

And I've coached track and baseball. Generally if you have an outstanding track kid, you watch him. It's like a whale, there is a little one always following. The little one is always following because you know, you are practicing with him. Trying to get to that level, so that always keeps you reaching.

This explains one way that a good or average athlete can get better. Athletic Director Roswell discussed the student-athletes at his school explaining how they are not all destined for the Hall of Fame, but can get better:

We have a youth program that takes 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and you have to live within a school district, not really... They had been

successful as 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders so Coach wanted to convince them that they could get better, and that boys grow, so just because you weren't a starter, just because you weren't... We were starting over in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and depending on how much you worked would determine playing time. He convinced them that football was a sport that was going to win a state championship someday, and obviously he did a good job.

Because children grow, especially in these early teen years, the coaches believe that they have to give everyone a shot and see who is willing to do the work to get better. Athletic Director Thomas related this story to me:

Quality, quality doesn't hurt. It certainly helps, but a lot of kids develop while they are here, in high school. We had one boy who when he showed up here was 5'4" and ended up being a defensive back. Well when he left he was 5'11" and he got a scholarship to Syracuse. So a lot of it is how a kid physically develops and matures while they're here.

They are saying that the more talent you have the better your chances are of winning, but it is not a requirement that you have a team loaded with blue chip recruits. Also they know that they cannot count out a kid based on what he looks like when he arrives on campus after his eighth grade year.

#### **Techniques for helping the players achieve beyond their potential.**

Motivating the student-athletes is important role for the coaches, the parents, and fellow teammates. People learn in a variety of ways, and different student-athletes model themselves after different people. Additionally, student-athletes learn a multitude of skills in a myriad of ways. They also have different skill sets and are motivated to achieve through different techniques. Coach Hamilton from Johnson County explains it to start this way:

Kids are kids. They're going be what you think they are going to be. And that's the key to coaching, you take kids that think they are average and you make them think that they are great. You are going to win a lot more then you lose if you do that.

Helping student-athletes achieve their goals is part of what makes coaching enjoyable, and is the head coach's responsibility, according to Allentown's Athletic Director Roswell:

I think in every sport you have to look at the potential of the players that are involved, but, but that but comes in, but once again we saw Coach Manly walk in here with Coach Dreifert and teams were only winning two or three games and they couldn't play with teams from the southern part of the state, and take those teams to state championships after that. So we feel that it can be done and it is the head coach's responsibility.

Not only is helping student-athletes achieve beyond their potential fun, it is crucial to success and a coach's responsibility.

Student-athletes are also encouraged to achieve by fellow student-athletes. Coach Pappas discusses how he believes other players help one another out or are useful as benchmarks. Coach Hamilton from Johnson County talks about how his players help motivate one another:

And it's not just the getting stronger. It's the closeness, when you watch 'em hug each other and cheer for one another, that's where it is. You can't develop that in English class.

... See I like that. The ninth graders come in here 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> period and get their name on the board and then these guys come in here and knock 'em off everyday. They get offended when the 9<sup>th</sup> graders make the board. The freshmen are a talented group, they went undefeated.

They are promoting friendly competition—contests against teammates, that help the players and the team get stronger—amongst the players in an attempt to help all of the players and the program achieve more. The student-athletes have a friendly competition and support for one another across sports, as well as the standard that the community sets as what they should strive for as explained by Principal Roberts of Allentown:

I do sense the celebration and camaraderie for when others are successful. Not so much competing against other sports. There might be more of that than I am aware of or sense, but it's such a strong community thing, that we're in this together. That we're Allentown, it's not that we're better than you because we're football.

...The other thing that I can say about that is the standard of success at Allentown has been defined as a state championship. That's a two-sided coin. What it means is that these kids in many cases probably do achieve beyond their perceived potential. It's

because of a combination of things. It's because of what they want, and what is expected of them from themselves, from their families, from their coaches, but they aspire to a very high standard.

The students and community are pushing the students to succeed. Athletic Director Roswell of Allentown talks about how the parents also work to motivate the student-athletes:

It's not so much the money, but the educational background of the parent, is really driving it because they believe that education is very important. They feel that the things that are surrounding education are very important also. And I think you find that these kind of people are successful at what they do. And so they feel that their children should be successful at what they're doing. It's just something that is handed down; success follows success, which follows success. You know if your father was very successful, you're not necessarily going to follow in his footsteps, he's going to give you a lot, even if it's just body language, everything he does is going to try and promote success in you. I think that's what we see.

The influence to succeed and achieve bombards these successful kids and programs from all angles and directions.

People who run successful programs work hard to achieve. The level of achievement is not limited by the athletic ability because the people stimulating the student-athletes—coaches, administrators, parent, and fellow athletes—are going on constantly. The student-athletes are motivated by sight, sound, camaraderie, and the pressure to live up to past successes. All of the factors work together, in an attempt to make the program as strong as possible.

### **Coaches and Players Must Believe They Are Going to Win**

Winning builds confidence and helps bring people together. “Everyone likes a winner,” (Principal Roberts, personal interview, 2004). The people in charge of hiring have to look for certain characteristics that they believe to be important, and with coaches that includes a hatred for losing according to Allentown's athletic director. Success and confidence work together in a cycle to keep a program winning. Furthermore, winning gives the community something

to be proud of, which cycles in with the confidence and success. Many times one team will step onto the field and even though the scoreboard reads zero to zero one team is already ahead in the minds of the coaches, players, and fans of both teams. Athletic Director Thomas from Metropolitan North and I discussed it:

AD Thomas: Well, we've gotten to the point where success is expected. And I think that rubs off on the kids, so when they get out on the field they expect to win. And I think that a lot of the teams they play come out onto the field expecting to lose. And I have seen us beat more talented teams because we are who we are.

Interviewer: When you stepped out on the field you were kind of ahead X amount of points. Or even if not that your kids felt they would make the come back if they were down going into the fourth quarter?

AD Thomas: Exactly, the psychological factor. The JV team has not lost a game in six years. It's been a rare occasion when they lose, so they expect to win when they move up to varsity.

Allentown's Coach Dreifert said it this way, "Even when we are losing going into the fourth quarter we have the confidence to know that the game is still ours to be had." These are just a few brief explanations of how confidence and past success can lead to continued success.

**The coaches in charge need to have an intense hatred of losing.**

Most people do not enjoy losing; they prefer winning, while not at all costs they get a much better feeling after winning a contest than just competing and losing.

Athletic Director Roswell of Allentown explains his hiring process and how it relates to a hatred of losing:

I've always said this, when you are hiring prospective coaches, one of things you want to find are people who can't stand to lose. They just can't stand it. You know it just eats them inside. Those kind of people can continue to put more and more and more time and effort into achieving those goals.

It is not enough that his coaches prefer to win, but they need to despise losing so they will do everything in their powers not let it happen. Metropolitan North's Athletic Director Thomas explains it in a slightly different manner:

First of all having a staff that was very dedicated to his ideas. And because we had been down for so long we wanted to be better and we worked very hard at being better. And it had a lot to do with his attitude toward winning. He wanted to win, if we'd be patient for him to get grounded, he knew he'd turn us into a winner.

It does not always have to be spoken as a hatred for losing, it can be demonstrated as an understanding and knowledge of winning and what is necessary to win games and championships. Coach Hamilton from Johnson County explains how he put his staff together through their background:

Right, because I was from the Southeastern United States and I knew 'em. Coach Jackson coached with me at Cole County (Coach Hamilton's former school) and Coach Rockford I've known him since whenever I was a young child, wherever he went he won. These are guys that I just knew and knew they were great coaches, so I wanted to bring them with me.

Winning is a priority to the people I interviewed, their players, and the communities that they represent. It is not the only thing, but it is important and they believe they can use it as a tool to help teach the student-athletes.

**A strong community spirit helps foster the necessary attitude.** High school football teams represent their communities, and the communities support their teams emotionally, physically, and financially. Emotional encouragement takes place by cheering at games and pep rallies, as well as recognizing players in off the field settings. Physical support happens by working on stadium clean-ups, chaperoning over night trips, and being in the stands at both home and road games. Financial support comes through the booster club, fund raising activities, and showing up at games, where the bulk of money is made through gate receipts and concessions. The community also receives recognition based on the success of the team, most often in local press and sometimes even through the national media. Allentown's Principal Roberts told a story of his program's national recognition:

And I'll be honest with you too, because you are talking about football. We could have won three state championships in basketball, but it wouldn't have brought us the broader attention football did. Soccer, same way as in baseball. Now baseball is a signature sport, we're known for our baseball. Soccer is a

signature sport; we're known here for soccer. And it's not just a matter of creating revenue streams. Everyone knows that football is the revenue sport. The culture and the broader interest people seem to have it, beyond County Gorman, beyond this community. My preacher, my Methodist preacher is from Buffalo, New York and he tells me when he comes back from visiting, people up there will ask him what he knows about Allentown High School. It's amazing.

National magazines have been known to showcase high profile high school athletes and schools with great achievement (Wieberg, 2004); it does not always have to just be through word of mouth.

Without the financial support of boosters and fans in the stadium at games there might not be high school sports as we know them in the United States of America. Athletic Director Thomas of Metropolitan North gives an example of how his program benefits from the local community:

Between two and three thousand dollars for an ordinary game [regular game day expenses]. It's \$37,000 when we go to Pro Stadium [about 5 blocks away from the school] and John Fieldstone [team owner] keeps the parking and concessions. So at least at Metropolitan Owned Stadium we can do our own concessions. Baseball boosters make some money that way. It's \$160,000, gate at the Pro Stadium. And each school has some other expenses, game films, pre-game meals, traveling expenses, buses. But you still make a nice chunk a change, netting about \$60,000. And we couldn't do it if the owner wouldn't let us, he makes a pretty penny, too. But for us we can draw a much bigger crowd, and are community gets even more behind us.

Sometimes the monetary needs might come through donations as Coach Hamilton of Johnson County noted:

Well they paid for it [new \$100,000 weight room equipment], but we designed it. It's nice, but you don't have to have that to win. It can give you some nice things and do some extra things, but you don't have to have a booster club to win.

According to the informants, the programs need all the help they can get financially, so donations, fund raising events, and coming to games is all greatly appreciated.

Regardless of the importance of money most every coach will tell you that the greatest support the community can give his/her team is the emotional kind.

Coach Dreifert discussed the feeling of being at a home game with his squad to me:

People start showing up at four o'clock to tailgate for our games on Fridays. We thought about redoing the home side bleachers, but people can bring blankets and have a kinda picnic feel the way it is set up right now. That is our home, the way it is so the community likes and stays with it. Not interested in changin' what's worked.

Knowing that you have the support of the entire group is tremendous, and worth the dangers associated with being a high profile head coach. The dangers include being berated by the press and booster club, and worse losing the job. According to Coach Hamilton, Johnson County support for the high school football program is beyond reproach:

There is no community support like here. There is nothing like it is here. Our gate at the state championship game was \$117,000. A lot of schools don't make that in five years, and that was one game for us. It's unparalleled here.

The emotional support helps carry the team when it starts slow, or is struggling. All three types of encouragement, emotional, physical, and financial help the programs immensely.

**Confidence and success run in a cycle together.** Which came first, the chicken or the egg? That question could be used in connection with confidence and success, which cycle back and forth with one another. The cycle of success and confidence can help a program win games. Allentown's Athletic Director Roswell talked about the two together in this fashion:

I don't care how small you are, if you come in and lift weights and we run the right kind of offense we can beat people. And he proved that we could. And once you establish that belief in people that they can achieve success. You know success gives you confidence and confidence leads to success, so it's a cycle and where do you break into that cycle. How do you get in there to start it, because you have to have success to be confident, but you have to have confidence to be successful?

...It gives people ownership in the program, and that's what you really want. If the parents feel ownership in it, and the coaches feel ownership in it, and the players feel ownership in it then they're not satisfied with not being successful. That's exactly that cycle I was

talking about. Success builds confidence and the only way to get in is to put more work in.

Coach Pappas of Metropolitan North also believes that success is closely linked to the confidence of his players as he described here:

That [winning attitude] is the truth; that has been the strength of our program the last ten years. We've had a continuation of the things that our coaches taught them, and rehashed them and the program is being regenerated because the coaches actually played in it. A lot of people on the outside don't know the inner workings of Metropolitan North High School football and a result of that when you bring someone in they tend to not realize and appreciate what it takes to be a football player at this school.

Confidence and success mutually reinforce one another to benefit winning programs. It seems to be magnified in programs where the coaches were former players, because they have a very strong existing connection to the program.

Successful programs have coaches and players who believe that they are going to win the game when they step out onto the field. Hiring coaches with a total disdain for losing often increases a program's chance of success. Furthermore, it helps to have the community supporting your program physically, financially, and emotionally. Lastly, a never-ending series of confidence and success needs to be cultivated throughout every facet of the program.

### **Maintaining the Long-Term Components of a Successful Program**

Program stakeholders (including players, coaches, parents, teachers, administrators, and boosters) must be willing to devote themselves to a program in order for it to stay successful. Programs are not just practicing for the current season, but are also developing players and coaches for the next season and beyond during the current season and off-season. Players and coaches can always work to improve physical conditioning and game knowledge. Sustained success starts as soon as one season ends, and focus must be placed on getting ready for the next one. This concept is dedicated to the more tangible parts of

keeping players physically strong and coaches in the program to maintaining stability with a focus on the big picture of the program.

**Off-season workouts.** Education and physical conditioning were always among the first things mentioned by the informants for this project. The players' minds and bodies must be sharp for them to perform at the level necessary to win football games and championships. The players grow together through the struggles and friendly competitions. Allentown's Coach Dreifert explains what his program did to make the kids get into the weight room:

So we spent a lot of time there [at the youth league practices] and you have to revamp the weight program and put it in place and then sell the kids on the importance of it. If you don't lift you're not going to win....

...We went into the weight room and covered it with mirrors. A whole wall full of mirrors because we want them to see themselves change in the mirror. So you put a strong foundation in place and prove to them that work is a virtue. We have a saying here, there is no substitute for strength and no excuse for lack of it. Because we built a room and you should come. You know if you want to win you'll come. You'll sacrifice, you'll be here.

Athletic Director Roswell also of Allentown boasts of the work put in by the school's coaches and athletes:

Because we've got a group of coaches here; it doesn't matter whether they are a football player, baseball player, tennis player, or swimmer, if they want to lift weights, those coaches are in there with them pushing them. I mean every period down there and they are motivating these kids to lift weights. That's what I see. You know you get people that know how to do things properly, that can get in the weight room with them. And the next thing you know, our little scrawny kids, that were very small, they're not [small anymore].

Even Principal Roberts of Allentown echoes the importance of weights to the football program, and the fact that like most schools, his allowed students to take it for physical education credit.

The coaches further explained that it is not all about building strength in the off-season, but the student-athletes conditioning, speed, and camaraderie as well. Johnson County's Coach Hamilton explained it in this fashion:

Coach Hamilton: See, this is where I think you win.

Interviewer: That's what Coach Dreifert said at Allentown High School.

Coach Hamilton: And it's not just the getting stronger. It's the closeness, when you watch 'em hug each other and cheer for one another, that's where it is. You can't develop that in English class.

The off-season helps foster team cohesion while they work at getting stronger and faster for next season. He further explained that if the student-athletes come in not ready to work, the coaches will take them outside and put them through conditioning drills, so that fear can be a motivating factor to work hard in the weight room.

Competition and rewards are set up for the student-athletes to help motivate them to work diligently during the off-season. Coach Pappas explains of Metropolitan North:

We have them perform 20 different exercises. Ten are body weight exercises, like sit-ups, dips, and running. Ten are weighted exercises like, squats and bench and clean, and military press. They're given points based on how they do at each exercise and are rewarded based on the total as opposed to just the performance in one exercise.

They have similar concepts at the other schools I visited, as Coach Hamilton explained from Johnson County:

I'll explain it here in a second (watching a kid get his weights up). Our "super-tiger test" is ranked, you get points for squats, clean, bench, 40, 10, bench hops, shuttle run, and mile and a half, so if you're a big guy and you squat 500, and the little guy is not going to squat as much, but he's going to run faster. So the kid who gets the most points... See all these pictures on the wall are all "super-tigers" from 1980 something on. And so the guys who get the most points are the all around athletes. Guys who are fast and strong.

The friendly competition is furthered by posting the top performers in the different exercises on a board for everyone who enters to see. So while the athletes are competing against one another, they are also encouraging one another to

constantly improve. Athletic Director Roswell of Allentown discussed the competition this way:

You have to teach kids that when things aren't going the way you want, you don't work less you don't rest you work harder you do more in the weight room. And when you do you start to see eventually that it starts to pay off, it becomes contagious. And we're to the point now in our football program where we don't have to motivate kids to come to the weight room. We're three deep and you're not walking on the field if you don't do it. We're not telling you that, it's the fact that there are two guys a head of you, and guess where they are? They're in the weight room. And basically that's it. It's competition for the spot.

Off-season conditioning is more than weight lifting. It includes bonding with teammates, competing with teammates and cardiovascular conditioning, too.

**Next season must be prepared for now.** As soon as one season ends the next one is on the coaches and returning players' minds. That is one drawback to having a continually successful program. Everyone in the community is wondering about next year as soon as this year is over, if not before. There is more than one strategy to help transition from one season to the next, but it is vital never to rest on the laurels of past success or current glory if it is to continue in the future. Athletic Director Thomas explicates the process at Metropolitan North:

Something that we do in football and I've recommended it to the other sports is we don't separate varsity and JV during practice. So it's one coaching staff. And then when the JV's have a game that's when we separate them out, the ninth and the tenth graders. And there is a group of coaches that go with them to that game.

They are limited in working with students that are not at the high school level. In different areas in the Southeastern United States of America middle school age athletes can be worked with or influenced by their probable high school coaches, Coach Hamilton at Johnson County also is the district's athletic director so he has an influence over which coaches get hired to coach at the middle school or junior high level. He believes that this is an advantage because the players are being taught through the same drills and football concepts from an early age, so that he does not have to spend time breaking bad habits and teaching things to

the players that they should already know. Allentown's Coach Dreifert told me about when he first arrived at Allentown to start preparing for the future:

The first thing you do to build a program is go to the youth. And you get the youth people energized about coming here. The ones that are already here you gonna have to deal with them. You know when you start trying to build a program you have to deal with what is here, but where you better focus a lot of your time is where the you is, because that's what's going to be your future. So that's what we did went to the youth practices walking around talking to the coaches and all that kind of stuff, and built relationships with those people so they understood we're here to help you and we need your kids to come over here and we need to have a grounded foundation about what were doing when they get here.

He went on to further explain how he has been allowed some influence over who is hired at the middle schools to benefit his school's program in a similar fashion to that at Johnson County.

Coaches at continually successful programs must also fight against an arrogance that returning players might develop, and/or a desire to rest on one's laurels and past performances. Athletic Director Roswell of Allentown discusses this with me:

You know that is really tough to do. It is really, but you have the expectation to win. And your job as coach is to not let them forget what they did to get to number one. You have to remember that they are a different team; it's a completely different team. Any time you change one player it's a different team. Even if you don't change anybody when you comeback the next year, it's going to be a different team. And it is the battle, and I think that you realize that those are the two things you are battling, you continue to tell the kids this why we are going to have to work harder, and we're going to have to do more then we did last year, not equal to last year. And you know, I honestly believe that it causes them to be better players, and causes your team to be better because everyone is playing tougher against you. That's what I do is make them do more because we're not going to rest on our laurels.

Coach Pappas from Metropolitan North talks about continuing to stay strong in the program this way:

I think that there is a tradition of, that was established here with [a previous head coach] in a style of football, and umm a style of, and of a style of getting strong and physical and we've tried to maintain

that. We kind of hang our hat on the tradition that was established with the earlier coaches. Nothing is personal, it's all program. And we tried to again use those things that have been successful for us and eliminate those that have caused us not to be as successful. We've eliminated trying to help every kid become a football player. Some kid's dream of being a football player and other kids make that a reality. So we stop wasting time with and spinnin' our wheels with kids who are dreamers, and dealt with more of the reality type.

It is a challenge faced by all consistent winners, staying hungry. The different programs strive to keep the coaching staff and players focused on the task at hand by continuing to develop the future as well as the present.

Maintaining a successful program over time is a tough challenge. Coaches and players must remember what brought them success previously and work to improve so as to reach beyond that level. Coaches and players are constantly working not only to prepare for the upcoming game or season, but the ones off in the future, too.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is divided into four main sections. First is the discussion of the eight emerging concepts as they relate to the research questions. Next, it explains the implications of the results of the study. Also discussed are the methodological issues that developed during the study. Finally, the chapter discusses future research ideas that developed through the information received from the current study.

#### **Discussion**

The subjects interviewed discussed a myriad of factors involved in working with a high school football program. Head coaches deal with many people who are all interested in the program's success. Players, assistant coaches, faculty, administrators, parents and the community that support the program all have a vested interest in the team's on field success. Each of these different groups affects a program's success. Barney (1991) introduced a model discussing resources impact on sustained competitive advantage in a business setting. A resource was deemed to create sustained competitive advantage if it was considered to be a valuable resource, a rare resource, an imperfectly imitable resource, and had no viable substitutes (Barney, 1991).

The following sections examine the emerging concepts identified in Chapter Four as they relate to the four tenants of Barney's (1991) model, determining if they meet the criteria necessary to be considered a resource leading to sustained competitive success. Following the examination of the emerging concepts as they relate to Barney's (1991) model the emerging concepts are discussed in relation to how the different geographically regioned programs differ in using them to achieve on-field victories.

### **Valuable Resources**

According to Barney (1991), improving an organization's effectiveness and efficiency through currently held resources makes those resources valuable. Money is a valuable resource in every industry including high school football. The informants all believed that while more money would never be turned away they have enough to keep their programs functioning at a high level. Setting a good example for the student-athletes is a valuable resource because as Coach Pappas of Metropolitan North said:

Again, we are about wholeness, and other people might view you as a great player and look forward to having you in their program, but we look for a great person that is going to help us be a good football team, help our school be a better recognized for academics or socially be a good example of what a Metropolitan North student should be.

Having the same philosophy run throughout the program is a valuable resource, because it eliminates mixed messages going out to the athletes, assistant coaches, parents, and teachers. Spending a great deal of time with the program may be more difficult for some stakeholders than others, but every minute people can put into the program is valued by its stakeholders. Programs need to improve from week to week during the season. Accomplishing this is a valuable program resource, because as the cliché goes, "If you are not going forwards, you must be going backwards." Johnson County's Coach Hamilton stated it this way when discussing play, "We aren't goin' to move onto play number two until we've got number one down. So, last season when we started in August, that's

what we did, ran that first play over and over and over.” Furthermore, anytime people can achieve beyond their perceived limitations or abilities it will be valued. Barney (1991) discusses value in terms of improved efficiency and effectiveness, and the coaches all discussed the value of having players perform up to and beyond their abilities. Pulling off this feat can be especially beneficial to a high school football program. It is also very valuable for players and coaches to believe that their team is going to win no matter what circumstances they might be facing. Finally, maintaining long-term components and goals is a valued resource for high school football programs, because the coaches never want to rest on past successes, and know that the preparation and work start all over as soon as one season ends (Roswell, personal interview, 2004). All eight of the concepts discussed as resources demonstrate value to the program.

### **Rare Resources**

Rare resources do not commonly exist amongst competitors (Barney, 1991). Finances as discussed by the informants in this study appear neither to be a rare resource nor evenly distributed amongst competitors. Principal Roberts of Allentown explained it this way:

Lots of people believe that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. In other words if you are winning, you get to have things that you want to need and other people are scraping to get by with half of what they need. Some of the perception, I worked in the central office before coming here, and they had two central stadiums, that everyone played out of ‘em and all your revenue went out centrally and got distributed out equally. You can do that, but you don’t get financially rewarded for hard work and success.

The stakeholders in programs work hard to obtain as much money as possible and use it wisely. Setting a good example for the student-athletes is a common thread amongst these programs, limiting its rareness. However, it is no easy task as they described to set a good example for the student-athletes. Next, a shared philosophy throughout the program emerged as a concept amongst the different programs. It fails Barney’s (1991) definition because while all three

programs believe that they need to have a shared philosophy in their individual programs, they all did not share the exact same philosophy. Moving on to the amount of time spent on a program to help keep it successful surfaces as not a rare resource. All of the different programs' players, coaches, and supporters devote many hours to the program, but there is no requisite number that guarantees a program success. Some people are able to get the same job done in less time, similar to one person typing 100 words per minute versus someone who types only 65 words per minute. Next, is a program's ability to improve within the season both mentally and physically. This is not a rare resource because by the accounts of all three coaches this needs to take place at all programs, and does to an extent. It does not always happen to the extent that they wish it would, nevertheless they believe in-season improvement leads to more victories. Furthermore, having players reach beyond their believed or perceived potential is not rare at the participant schools. All of the coaches talked about how they hope to have players attain this lofty goal, and motivate their players during workouts, practices and discussions about performing at a high level. Winning is what this study is all about, and having the confidence that your team is going to win despite the circumstances, or in the face of many obstacles is not a rare resource at these schools. Metropolitan North's Athletic Director Thomas said this about a confidence that the team was going to win:

Well, we've gotten to the point where success is expected. And I think that rubs off on the kids, so when they get out on the field they expect to win. And I think that a lot of the teams they play come out onto the field expecting to lose. And I have seen us beat more talented teams because we are who we are.

Lastly, working on the future while staying in the present is a difficult goal to achieve, but all three of these programs make it a priority, eliminating it as a rare resource according to Barney (1991). None of the emerging concepts discussed as resources are a rare resource according to Barney's (1991) model.

## **Imperfectly Imitable Resources**

Imperfectly imitable resources are derived from three possible sources, history, social complexity, or causal ambiguity (Barney, 1991). Money at all of the high schools in this study—and presumably high schools throughout the country—is used for the same basic items (facilities, equipment, and team meals). There were several ways discussed by the informants on how to try and raise more money if there is a belief that the program needs it. Meaning finances do not qualify under the unique history of a specific program, being socially complex, or having causally ambiguous reasons for a resource to be imperfectly imitable. Coaches, teachers, parents, and administrators are hoping the youth will imitate the good example they are trying to set for them, therefore it is an obtainable resource under Barney's (1991) definition. The example simply must be set by the people in charge of the program and followed by the youth in the program.

Continuing through the concepts, all the different stakeholders sharing a philosophy can be imitated by other programs that are not currently doing it. Other programs may find it difficult to achieve a core group of people pushing a philosophy so that it takes hold at another program, but since all three of the schools used for this study have accomplished it, it stands to reason that others can make it happen, too. As stated previously, time is different for everyone making it hard for others to imitate how one person or group uses it; however it is not socially complex, ambiguous or related to historical significance, so it is not imperfectly imitable. Every program is different, working at its own pace, learning at its own pace, therefore how one program improves itself during the course of the season cannot be easily duplicated, but it can be modeled, and then molded to meet a different groups' needs, and remain a goal of every program. Simply put, the time invested in a program and in-season improvements can be duplicated by other programs. Next, achieving beyond one's perceived abilities is nearly impossible to imitate because the athletes at the various schools are different and how they respond to different motivating factors is different, too. This socially complex situation happens at all three of the programs in this study.

While they all three might get to this result in different ways, they all get the same end result. Similar to achieving beyond ones potential, having confidence, or the belief the team is going to win despite circumstances is something that is difficult to replicate, because of the myriad of situations and people involved. This phenomena is based in the program's history as well as being socially complex, but all three schools have achieved this capability with different personnel and over different time spans, making it imitable. Maintaining an eye on future goals and plans for the developing the program can be replicated, especially if a newly hired head coach looks back at the history of another program and tries to duplicate it in comparison to how long the programs have been under their current regimes.

While exceeding expectations and the coaches and players having confidence that they will win the game are socially complex, it is not to a point where this phenomenon cannot happen at other schools. Even the unique history of a program can be replicated to a certain extent, therefore eliminating it as possibly being imperfectly imitable. The other six emerging concepts discussed do not scratch the surface for possible consideration as imperfectly imitable through unique historical conditions, causal ambiguity, or social complexity.

### **Substitutability**

Barney (1991) stated that having neither a strategically comparable resource nor the ability to develop a similar strategy makes a resource nonsubstitutable. Money is a finite resource; however, the way a program tries to raise extra funds may be substituted. An example would be substituting a bake sale for a magazine sale. It might not change the amount of money raised, but there are a variety of ways to do it. Also, as explained in the "Rareness" section money may be used in different ways by different programs.

There is no substitute for setting a good example for the student-athletes and having them follow it. Everyone interviewed spoke of the importance

character and developing the student-athletes as quality adults and not just athletes plays in what they do. According to the people interviewed for this study there is no substitute for having a shared philosophy. However, one might argue that because there are many different philosophies that work they are substitutable for one another. To clarify, having a shared philosophy is non-substitutable, but one philosophy could be substituted for another. For example Allentown's shared philosophy is, "Academics come first, and everything else is a close second," (Dreifert, personal interview, 2004; Roberts, personal interview, 2004; Roswell, personal interview, 2004). While the philosophy at Johnson County is about being one family (Hamilton, personal interview, 2004).

None of the informants disagreed that you have to put in time to be successful, but because different people grow, learn, and process information at different speeds, the speed of growth, recovery, or learning becomes a substitute for extra time needed to make the same concept happen. Every coach talks about peaking at the right time and improving with each game and each play, so there is no substitute for being able to improve during the season. Furthermore, there is no substitute for athletes achieving beyond their potential. One might try to argue that having superior talent is a substitute for achieving past perceived limits, but making that argument means that the point of achieving those extremes has been lost because that athlete will not know or not care that s/he is not supposed to win the battle. Confidence helps people get through all sorts of difficult situations including sporting events. The informants talked about games that their teams won when they knew they had less talent than their opponents (Dreifert, personal interview, 2004; Hamilton, personal interview, 2004; Pappas, personal interview, 2004; Roswell, personal interview, 2004; Thomas, personal interview, 2004). Finally there is no substitute for maintaining a program over the long haul and working towards future goals during the season and off-season. Money, a shared philosophy, and invested time as discussed by the informants are unsubstitutable, but can be accomplished in different manners making them a kind of hybrid when answering the substitutability issue under Barney's (1991)

model. According to the informants there are no substitutes for the other five concepts discussed as resources.

### **Comparing the Programs**

The schools used in this study were selected because they came from different geographical regions, yet were able to win over 150 games and multiple state championships from 1984 to 2003. They were therefore identified as programs that achieve sustained competitive advantage. The emerging concepts discussed as resources all play a role in the different programs ability to win games, except for money, according to the informants even though they did not fit the criteria for sustained competitive advantage as set forth by Barney (1991). The informants discussed money, setting a good example, in-season improvement, overachieving, and confidence in winning in similar fashions. However, the discussion on executing shared philosophies, time invested in the program, and preparing for the program's future revealed some differences.

**Discussion of the emerging concepts that were used in a similar fashion amongst the three programs.** The informants at Johnson County, Allentown, and Metropolitan North all discussed the money they receive from the state, county, boosters and gate receipts, but none thought that it was a major contributor to a program's success. Furthermore, the participants all believed that the players needed to have good role models, and could draw from parents, teachers, administrators, coaches, and other players. It was important to everyone interviewed to not only talk about being a quality person, but, to display it as well. Continuing to work at getting better and finishing was important to all the coaches and athletic directors. All of the participants in the study discussed the importance getting players to push to a point where they were performing better than anyone thought that they would be able. Moreover, they all believed that they had beaten more talented teams and went to games with a psychological advantage over opponents because of the names on their jerseys.

**Differences amongst the programs shared philosophy.** While most of the different concepts were discussed in similar terms, not all of them were. First, everyone discussed the importance of having all the stakeholders adhering to one philosophy. At Metropolitan North the philosophy was about discipline, organization, and treating student-athletes the same as nonstudent-athletes and star players the same as non-star players. Coach Pappas was there for the players, but he is not their pal. Similarly at Allentown, where the philosophy is, “Academics are first everything else is a close second” (Roberts, personal interview, 2004; Roswell, personal interview, 2004), organization, discipline, and an understanding of who is in charge is clear. While it is also clear who is in charge at Johnson County, with importance placed on discipline and organization there is a friendlier and more jovial atmosphere amongst the players and coaches. It was clear at practice and workouts that Coach Hamilton was in charge, but everyone enjoying the time together was important, too. The different programs have a common philosophy within the individual program and school, but it is unique at each place.

**Lots of time is invested, but in different ways, and by different people at the various programs.** Every program has various people who invest a great deal of time into the program. At Metropolitan North it is coaches and players who are putting in the vast majority of the time. The players and coaches at Johnson County put in enormous hours, too, but they also have a large booster club working hard to do whatever it can to make the program better. They raise money through a variety of events for better equipment and other extra benefits, like t-shirts, to give to the players. The booster club at Johnson County is made up primarily of community residents as opposed to parents like at Allentown. Allentown has its parents investing large quantities of time through the efforts of the booster club to go along with the hours put in by the team’s coaches and players. The Allentown boosters work on stadium projects as well as help raise money for the program (Roberts, personal interview, 2004; Roswell, personal interview, 2004). The different programs have many people working hard and investing many hours into making the program a successful one.

**A program's future may be managed differently depending on the circumstances.** Finally, all of the programs work on the future of their programs both during and out of season, but in different ways. Allentown coaches work not only with the junior high school feeding into their high school, but also with local youth programs. They work with the coaches and kids in junior high on strategies and weight training. Furthermore, they are making a connection with the community, so people know who they are and know what they believe (Dreifert, personal interview, 2004; Roberts, personal interview, 2004; Roswell, personal interview, 2004). In Johnson County, Coach Hamilton is also the district's athletic director, so he selects the junior high coaches and has them running similar drills and plays during practice and in the off-season. He and his staff do not have as much personal contact with the youth program, but are well known figures in the county (Hamilton, personal interview, 2004). Both in Allentown and Johnson County the junior high schools have teams that play competitively in the fall, but not the kids coming to Metropolitan North. However, Metropolitan North is allowed to have eighth graders come to the high school to lift weights after school during the spring semester before they begin high school (Thomas, personal interview, 2004). Metropolitan North, unlike the other two schools, has everyone in the program practice together, so that more experienced players can also help teach, and then only separate the kids for games (Pappas, personal interview, 2004). Each of the programs does what it believes to be best for ensuring future success in its program.

	<b>Allentown High School</b>	<b>Johnson County High School</b>	<b>Metropolitan North High School</b>
<b>Money Factor</b>	Work hard to have it, and get what they need	Strong booster club in place and community support make it less of an issue	Struggle to make ends meet and earn extra money
<b>Setting a Good Example</b>	Emphasis placed on maturity	Emphasis on modeling it to the student-athletes	Focus on discipline and organization
<b>Having a Shared Philosophy</b>	“Academics are first, everything else is a close second”	Creating a “family-type” relationship amongst everyone involved with the program	Everyone gets treated the same, and excellence is expected
<b>Stakeholders Time Invested</b>	Coaches, players, and Parents	Coaches, players, and boosters	Coaches and players
<b>In-Season Improvement</b>	Done through hard work	Done through practice and shared expectations and ideals	Expected, and worked on in practice
<b>Athletes Achieving Beyond Potential</b>	Derived from parents, coaches, and other players expectations	Modeled by the coaches  Discussed as an expectation	Achieved through hard work and expectations from past success
<b>Confidence the Team Will Win</b>	Based in program’s history	Based in program’s history	Based in program’s history
<b>Preparing for the Program’s Future</b>	Control of middle school, and relationship with youth programs	Head coach is also athletic director for district, therefore has control over middle school programs	Varsity and JV practice together  Eighth graders allowed to do weights at HS during spring

Figure 11: A summary description of how the different programs use the emerging concepts. based on informants information.

## Summary

After relating the emerging concepts to Barney’s (1991) model, it was determined that while all of the emerging concepts, which are discussed as resources, have value, none of the resources meet the other three tenets necessary for sustained competitive advantage, if strict adherence to the model is followed.

However, a broader definition of rare may be utilized in some instances. As Barney notes, “...it may be possible for a small number of firms in an industry to possess a particular resource and still generate a competitive advantage. In general as long as the number of firms that possess a particular valuable resource (or a bundle of valuable resources) is less than the number of firms

needed to generate perfect competition in an industry (Hirschleifer, 1980), that resource has the potential of generating competitive advantage,” (1991; p. 107). In such a case, four of the concepts may qualify as sustained competitive advantage rare resources. The four that qualify with the more liberal definition are: 1) The importance of setting a good example for the student-athletes; 2) Having continual improvement in the program while in-season; 3) Possessing players who achieve beyond their perceived potential; and 4) Coaches and players having confidence that they are going to win the game.

According to Barney (1986a; 1986b), Lippman and Rummelt (1982) imperfect imitability—resources that cannot be attained by those that do not already possess them—takes place in one of three ways or a combination of the three, which are: 1) Unique historical conditions; 2) Causal ambiguity; and 3) Social complexity (Barney, 1991). Both having players achieve beyond their perceived abilities and confidence in winning games, are socially complex resources. Additionally, a program’s confidence in winning games is built upon a unique history, because it is hard to do what you have not done before (Pappas, personal interview, 2004). While these two resources have qualities leading towards being imperfectly imitable, the supporting data is not strong enough to conclude that these resources are truly imperfectly imitable. Furthermore, the other six resources do not meet any of the criteria for imperfect imitability (Barney, 1991).

The role of finances, the time invested into a program, and having a shared philosophy throughout the program and the high school, are three emerging concepts that fail the substitution test. Resources are deemed substitutable for one another when they are used separately, but yield the same results (Barney, 1991). So while there is no substitute for money, there are numerous ways a program can generate funds. Having a shared philosophy throughout the program and school is important according to all those interviewed, but different philosophies are working at the different schools. Stakeholders spending lots of time working with the program may be substituted in a variety of ways. Whether substitution happens through more participants, or

because some people are able to do the same job in less time; it is substitutable, even though all the informants felt spending lots of time working with the program was crucial (Figure 6, on the next page, is a chart diagramming all of the summary information).

	Valuable	Rare	Imperfectly Imitable	Non-Substitutable
Money Factor	Yes	No	No	No
Setting a Good Example	Yes	No	No	Yes
Having a Shared Philosophy	Yes	No	No	No
Stakeholders Time Invested	Yes	No	No	No
In-Season Improvement	Yes	No*	No	Yes
Athletes Achieving Beyond Potential	Yes	No*	No**	Yes
Confidence the Team Will Win	Yes	No*	No**	Yes
Preparing for the Program's Future	Yes	No	No	Yes

\*Could be if liberal definition of rare is used.

\*\*Data not strong enough to support concluding that the resource is imperfectly imitable.

Figure 12: Explanation of how the emerging concepts, known as resources work in conjunction with Barney's (1991) model.

Only when a more generous definition of rareness is applied to the resources as per se by Barney (1991) based on the industry do any of the resources fit the billing of helping create a sustained competitive advantage. Having athletes achieve beyond their perceived abilities and a team having confidence that it can win the game despite the obstacles it might face both have social complexity making them imperfectly imitable. Furthermore, a team's ability to have confidence that it will win is based upon a unique history to that program. None of the other six resources qualify as resources which may lead to sustained competitive advantage even under the broader definition of rareness based on Barney's (1991) model.

## Implications

Barney's (1991) model is an important starting point for examining the tangible and intangible resources in competitive sport, but to claim that a resource cannot help create a sustained competitive advantage because it does not strictly adhere to the model may not work within the context of high school athletics. While none of the resources defined qualify under Barney's (1991) model as resources leading to sustained competitive advantage; it should be noted that seven of the eight concepts (only finances did not) emerged because the informants believed they were important and helped their programs gain success.

There is one common thread amongst the seven emerging concepts—setting a good example, having a shared philosophy, investing time in the program, in-season improvement, exceeding expectations, confidence that the team will win, and working on the future—when they are likened ingredients of organizational culture. Schein (1985) discussed three levels of organizational culture—artifacts, values, and assumptions—with Hatch (1993) adding symbols and connecting terms between the levels, interpretation, manifestation, realization, and symbolization. When these seven different resources are summed together, it can be asserted that bundling these resources together gives each of these high school football programs an organizational culture, which is valuable because it allows an approach to improve efficiency and success. As a collective group the resources also ward off the threats of competitors. Next, the organizational culture is rare even under the strictest Barney (1991) guidelines because the strategies used are not held by a multitude of programs. Additionally, the resource of organizational culture is imperfectly imitable under the unique history of each program, because of the timing and different people involved at each school, and they are each socially complex because of the vast number of people working within the program at all levels. Finally, there is no substitute for the organizational culture that has developed at Allentown, Johnson County, and Metropolitan North High Schools, and none

could replace either of the others. The three football programs all are able to consistently win football games, but the racial compositions of the areas that send students to the schools are different, the socio-economic status of the students and their parents are different at each school, and all of these differences have to be worked with properly by the coaching staff and administrators to attain the desired results, wins. Therefore, it can be said that organizational culture provides sustained competitive advantage to these programs.

Organizational culture can be simply how people routinely interact with one another (Goffman, 1959; Van Maanen, 1979), the common practices of an organization (Homans, 1950), or a philosophy that exists within an organization (Ouchi, 1981; Pascale & Athos, 1981). These definitions all examine how an organization accomplishes its goals similarly to what Allentown, Johnson County, and Metropolitan North's football programs are doing. The resources mentioned by the informants are concerned with the processes they use and the communication amongst different stakeholders necessary to maintain a highly successful program. Essentially a program is the component of analysis (Gerrard, 2003), and the organizational culture created its resource that qualifies as creating sustained competitive advantage when evaluated through Barney's (1991) model. Furthermore this study examined RBV in relation to a non-professional sport organization as suggested by Gerrard (2003), showing it to be a useful tool.

### **Future Directions**

This study demonstrates further that RBV research is applicable to the competitive sport world. Additionally, it shows that the RBV framework works well for flushing out intangible resources available to organizations when examined qualitatively. It determined that the intangible resources in competitive high school athletics rarely meet Barney's (1991) standards unless applied more liberally based upon the industry. Therefore, developing a competitive sport

variation on Barney's valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable resources would be beneficial to sport organizations. Rating the strength of different resources on a numerical scale under Barney's (1991) four tenants would give researchers and practitioners alike a better understanding of the importance the different resources have on a program's success.

Gerrard (2003) expressly questioned whether the RBV framework could be useful in non-professional sport organizations. Studies similar to this one based on different sports and at higher or lower levels of competition might help practitioners get the most out of the resources available to them. Having the data from different levels of competition and different sports would make for quality discussion amongst researchers and practitioners on why the differences exist between sports. Furthermore, including consistent losing programs—those that are on the opposite end of the spectrum as suggested by Pettigrew (1990)—would help researchers determine whether or not the identified resources were truly the key to sustained competitive advantage. Along similar lines to Gerrard's (2003) suggestion that a better understanding of why some organizations fail or perform poorly, the examination of losing programs as well as more research into other successful programs might help gain a greater understanding of the imperfectly imitable and substitutability questions. Finally, more and deeper qualitative work is needed to untangle the imperfect imitability (Barney, 1986a; 1986b; Lippman & Rummelt, 1982) question of unique histories, social complexity, and causal ambiguity associated with successful teams.

### **Final Remarks**

This study has indicated that individual intangible and tangible resources in competitive sport may not fit into Barney's (1991) model, but when put together as a bundle of resources (Barney, 1991; Gerrard, 2003; Powell, 2001; Schroeder, et al., 2002) they work together to be a cumulative resource that leads to a program's sustained competitive advantage. For this study that is believed to most closely relate to the concept of organizational culture. As

suggested by Slack (1998), organizational culture is an important area for sport management research that has been largely ignored. Within this organizational culture framework sustained competitive advantage research offers great potential for future research.

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What factor(s) do you believe lead to a programs continued success?
2. What specific factor(s) make this program win year in and year out?
3. When you look at the most successful programs in the area and state, what stands out about them?
4. When you look at the least successful programs in the area and state, what stands out about them?
5. What do you think this program needs to improve to be even better?
6. Do you think that time has changed what helps a program gain and maintain a high level of success?
7. What parts of the program have you had to change to keep this program winning?
8. Tell me the best parts about working in high school athletics and trying to create and maintain a successful program.
9. Tell me the most difficult parts about working in high school athletics and trying to create and maintain a successful program.
10. Do you think having and maintaining a successful program is the most important part of your job? If not where does it rank in importance?
11. Do you think the problems faced in maintaining your program are specific to your program or similar to the ones faced by other coaches in the area? Region? State? Country?

## APPENDIX B

### HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL FORM



Office of the Vice President  
For Research  
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2763  
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

#### **APPROVAL MEMORANDUM** Human Subjects Committee

Date: 1/20/2004

**Frank L. Ivey**  
1845 Belle Vue Way, Apt. 137  
Tallahassee, FL 32304

Dept.: **Sport Management**

From: **David Quadagno, Chair** 

Re: **Use of Human Subjects in Research**  
**Sustained Competitive Advantage in High School Football**

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be exempt per 45 CFR § 46.101(b) 2 and has been approved by an accelerated review process.

**The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.**

If the project has not been completed by **1/19/2005** you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Aubrey Kent  
HSC No. 2003.752

## APPENDIX C

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I freely and voluntarily give my consent to be a participant in the research project entitled, "Investigating and Comparing the Resources Leading to Sustained Competitive Advantage in High School Football." Trey Ivey, a doctoral student in the Sport Management program at Florida State University, is conducting the research. I understand that the purpose of the research is to gain a better understanding of what it takes to have and maintain a successful high school football program.

I understand that I will be interviewed about my work relations and experiences by Mr. Ivey who will keep my responses confidential to the extent allowed by law. I understand that nothing I say will be associated with my name or used in any way that will identify my position, my employer, or me. I understand that I may be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview and/or a focus group interview. I understand that I may refuse to do either or both. I understand that any tape recordings of my comments will be transcribed for research purposes only and destroyed within one year of the date they are recorded.

I understand that I may withdraw from participation in the research at any time; by saying I wish to stop, withdraw, or refuse.

If I have questions, I understand that I can contact Trey Ivey at the Florida State University Department of Sport Management, 125 Tully Gym, (850) 644-4873, by fax at (850) 644-0975, and by email at flit03@hotmail.com (internet). I can also contact Dr. Aubrey Kent, Chair of Mr. Ivey's research committee in the Sport Management Department, at (850) 644-7174, by fax at (850) 644-0975, and by email at kent@coe.fsu.edu (internet). Mr. Ivey guarantees the foregoing conditions to me in exchange for my agreement to participate in the research. I acknowledge that I may refuse to sign this form if I prefer to give verbal but not written consent to participate in the research.

In checking the following categories, I indicate my willingness to participate in Mr. Ivey's research project.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be interviewed, one-on-one.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to participate in a focus group interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree for my interview(s) to be audiotaped.

Interviewee signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

### DATA INVENTORY

- 1) Lincoln battles history. *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 20, 2002.
- 2) Lincoln's late flurry salvages tie. *Tallahassee Democrat*, September 21, 2002.
- 3) Hall of Fame coach discusses philosophy. *Monticello News*, September 7, 1994.
- 4) Interview transcription with Brad Michaels. October 1, 2002.
- 5) My notes from interview with Brad Michaels. October 1, 2002.
- 6) Florida Independent League, a league of their own: Small independent schools can't compete with big programs. *Tallahassee Democrat*, August 29, 2002. Brian McLaughlin.
- 7) Florida Independent League, a league of their own: Big schools shouldn't have to apologize for success. *Tallahassee Democrat*, August 29, 2002. Brian McLaughlin.
- 8) Interview transcription with Gerry Courtnall. October 16, 2002.
- 9) My notes from interview with Gerry Courtnall. October 16, 2002.
- 10) Conversation with my parents about sustained competitive success and the research process. October 24, 2002.
- 11) Interview transcription with Tom Walker. October 29, 2002.
- 12) My notes from interview with Tom Walker. October 29, 2002.
- 13) Valdosta High School Football Website ([www.valdostawildcats.com](http://www.valdostawildcats.com)). Retrieved November 5, 2002.
- 14) Winnersville USA. *Sports Illustrated*, October 31, 1988.
- 15) Interview transcription with Shawn Copter. November 22, 2002.
- 16) My notes from interview with Shawn Copter. November 22, 2002.
- 17) My notes from attending Lincoln vs. Ft. Walton Beach. November 23, 2002.
- 18) My notes from attending Lincoln vs. Lake City Columbia. November 29, 2002.
- 19) Conversation with Newscaster Barnes and Cameraman Jones about successful high school football programs. August 27, 2003.
- 20) Johnson County High School football programs (1988, 1990, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2003)
- 21) Dave Campbell's Texas Football Website ([www.texasfootball.com](http://www.texasfootball.com)). Retrieved January 23, 2003.
- 22) University Interscholastic League Website ([www.uil.utexas.edu](http://www.uil.utexas.edu)). Retrieved January 30, 2003.
- 23) Florida High School Athletic Association Website ([www.fhsaa.org](http://www.fhsaa.org)). Retrieved January 30, 2003.
- 24) Alabama High School Athletic Association Website ([www.ahsaa.com](http://www.ahsaa.com)). Retrieved January 30, 2003.

- 25) Georgia High School Association Website ([www.ghsa.net](http://www.ghsa.net)). Retrieved January 30, 2003.
- 26) Louisiana High School Athletic Association Website ([www.lhsaa.org](http://www.lhsaa.org)). Retrieved January 30, 2003.
- 27) Mississippi High School Athletic Association Website ([www.misshsaa.com](http://www.misshsaa.com)). Retrieved January 30, 2003.
- 28) South Carolina High School League Website ([www.schsl.org](http://www.schsl.org)). Retrieved January 30, 2003.
- 29) Allentown High School Website. Retrieved March 11, 2004.
- 30) Johnson County High School Website. Retrieved March 11, 2004.
- 31) Metropolitan North High School Website. Retrieved March 11, 2004.
- 32) Interview transcription with Coach Dreifert. April 8, 2004.
- 33) My notes on interview with Coach Dreifert. April 8, 2004.
- 34) Interview transcription with Principal Roberts. April 9, 2004.
- 35) My notes on interview with Principal Roberts. April 9, 2004.
- 36) Interview transcription with Athletic Director Roswell. April 9, 2004.
- 37) My notes on interview with Athletic Director Roswell. April 9, 2004.
- 38) Allentown High School programs (1989, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003)
- 39) Allentown local newspaper website. Retrieved April 10, 2004.
- 40) Allentown's area major newspaper website. Retrieved April 10, 2004.
- 41) Interview transcription with Coach Hamilton. April 18, 2004.
- 42) My notes on interview with Coach Hamilton. April 18, 2004.
- 43) Interview transcription with Coach Olson and Coach Stubblefield. November 11, 2002.
- 44) My notes from interview with Coach Olson and Coach Stubblefield. November 11, 2002.
- 45) Johnson County local newspaper website. Retrieved April 20, 2004.
- 46) Interview transcription with Athletic Director Thomas. May 2, 2004.
- 47) My notes on interview with Athletic Director Thomas. May 2, 2004.
- 48) Interview transcription with Coach Pappas. May 3, 2004.
- 49) My notes on interview with Coach Pappas. May 3, 2004.
- 50) Metropolitan North High School programs (1986, 1991, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003)
- 51) Metropolitan North High School's area major paper website. Retrieved May 6, 2004.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Trey Ivey was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1976. His family settled in De Soto, Texas, a suburb of Dallas in the spring of 1990. A member of the varsity baseball team, he graduated from Duncanville High School in 1994. Matriculating to Southwestern University, in Georgetown, Texas that fall where he was a four-year letter winner in golf and a member of the Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity. After graduating from Southwestern University in the spring of 1998, with a B.A., majoring in political science with a minor in kinesiology, he took a year off before beginning his masters work at Baylor University, in Waco, Texas. In the fall of 2000 Trey earned an M.S. from Baylor University, majoring in sport management. The spring semester of 2001 he entered the Florida State University to begin work on a Ph.D. in sport management. While at the Florida State University he taught LAP classes (aerobic conditioning, bowling, flag football, and tennis) as well as academic ones (human resource management in sport management, sport ethics, and sport law), but spent the majority of his assitanship hours as the Coordinator of Undergraduate Advising for Sport Management. In addition to his educational experiences, the author did summer internships for the American Junior Golf Association, the Indiana Golf Association/Indiana Section of the PGA, and the North Texas Section of the PGA helping organize and run both amateur and professional golf tournaments around the United States of America and Canada.