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Distributive justice in intercollegiate athletics perceptions of sport management students

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Neil Robert Bishop entitled "Distributive justice in intercollegiate athletics perceptions of sport management students." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Sports Management.

Jim Bemiller, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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and recommend its acceptance:

Dr. Robin Hardin

Dr. Gi-Yong Koo

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges
Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**Distributive Justice in Intercollegiate Athletics:
Perceptions of Sport Management Students**

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Neil Robert Bishop
May 2009

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Abstract

Research has found that coaches, administrators, and athletes at NCAA institutions believe that distributing resources equally or based on need were the most fair distribution methods. The current study builds on these findings by examining the views of fairness among college sport management students in distribution and retribution scenarios. The nine allocation principles listed for each scenario were (a) equality of treatment, (b) equality of opportunity, and (c) equality of results; equity based on (d) effort, (e) productivity, (f) revenue production, (g) spectator appeal, (h) ability; and (i) need. In each distributive scenario, subjects were asked to rate the fairness of each allocation principle and to choose one of the nine principles to implement. The participants' responses were analyzed by gender, student classification (undergraduate or graduate), their institution's NCAA division, and whether or not they had previously examined distributive justice.

Need and equality of treatment were the highest rated principles overall, with equity based on revenue production generally rated third highest. These three principles were also overwhelmingly selected by subjects for implementation in each scenario. Equality of opportunity was rated the most unfair principle by all groups in the study. When analyzed by group membership the results indicated that women and Division III respondents favored equality based principles, while males showed support for equity based principles, particularly revenue production. Analysis of NCAA expense reports illustrate a lack of implementation of the equality of treatment and need based principles and an adherence to equity based on revenue production and spectator appeal (Mahoney & Pastore, 1998). In light of those reports, the

results of this study show that there may be theoretical implications connected with certain principles. Although rated most fair, need and equality of treatment are often overlooked in real allocation situations and are more idealistic principles. Equity principles, particularly based on revenue production, are a more realistic choice for implementation and are selected more frequently within an athletic department in real allocation situations.

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Chapter I—Introduction

The distribution of resources within intercollegiate athletic departments is a complex and often controversial issue. Administrators in charge of distributing resources are constantly battling requests from coaches and teams that feel entitled to more money, facilities, and equipment. Coaches plead for more resources due to the success of their team, ability to generate revenue or draw spectators, long hours, hard work, and insufficient resources in general. This study will attempt to uncover what methods of distribution future leaders in collegiate athletics feel are most fair in situations of distribution and retribution in NCAA athletic departments.

Statement of the Problem

While there are many factors that influence the distribution of resources in an intercollegiate athletic department, the decision ultimately lies in the hands of the administrators. There are two general perspectives on how administrators view the role of the athletic department in the university, and the decision on how to allocate resources typically coincides with that perspective. Some administrators view the athletic department as an instrumental tool to generate prestige and resources for the university. Others, including the NCAA, maintain that the athletic department is there to develop well rounded students-athletes and that the system should strive to benefit all athletes equally (Mahony, Hums, & Riemer, 2005). Each perspective would lead to different distribution outcomes among teams in athletic departments. Administrators adhering to the first perspective would be more likely to allocate more resources to the teams that can generate revenue, publicity, and have the potential to be successful.

Decision makers adhering to the latter perspective would allocate resources to teams more equally and not be worried about rewarding teams that generate revenue or positive publicity for the university. The first perspective would be more common at the Division I level where sports have the ability to generate revenue, publicity, and enhance the school's overall image. At the Division II and III levels, the second perspective would be more common as resources are likely to be distributed more evenly among teams (Mahony et al., 2005).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the current study was to build on prior research by investigating the perceptions of graduate and undergraduate sport management students regarding the fairness of distribution and retribution methods within an athletic department. Research has analyzed the perceptions of fairness of athletic administrators and coaches currently making the decisions on the distribution of resources. This study will expand the research by analyzing how the future decision makers in intercollegiate athletics perceive distributive justice principles.

The current research examines what distribution methods sport management students perceived as fair in two different situations. First, in a situation where there is an excess of resources that will be distributed among teams, and also in a situation in which resources will be reduced from teams in the athletic department. The study also sought to examine whether there are any differences in the perceived fairness between different groups of sport management students. Prior research has revealed males and Division I respondents to be more supportive of the equity based contributions while females and Division III respondents rated the equality

based distributions more fair (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b; Mahony, Hums, & Riemer, 2002; Mahony, Riemer, Breeding, & Hums, 2006).

This study will be useful to gain the perspective of a younger generation that has been raised in the era of big time collegiate athletics (Zimbalist, 1999). The recent growth and movement towards increased specialization in sport may give the next generation of sport management students a different perspective than the coaches, athletic directors, and athletic administrators that have been previously examined. It is important to examine the perceptions of students currently studying sport management. These students are the next generation of decision makers in sport and their perceptions of the fairness of distribution methods could have a significant influence on the direction of college athletics in the future.

This study examined current sport management students' perceptions of the fairness of nine distributive justice principles. The nine principles examined were: (a) three equality based principles, which included equality of treatment, equality of results, and equality of opportunity; (b) five equity based principles, which included spectator appeal, ability to generate revenue, effort, productivity, and ability; and (c) a single principle of need.

Significance of the Study

It is important for the future leaders and decision makers in collegiate athletics to be properly educated on the different distribution methods and their outcomes. The absence of a perfect, all encompassing distribution method only enhances the need for current sport management students to be aware and prepared for the dilemma of distributing resources within an athletic department. Previous research has shown that equality of treatment, need, and

equality of results were generally rated as the most fair among different groups in athletic departments while contribution based principles were generally rated unfair (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b; Mahony et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2006). While equality of treatment, equality of results, and need were rated most fair by respondents, research explained that those distribution methods were not being implemented in athletic departments. Instead, distributions appeared to be based more off the equity based revenue production and spectator appeal (Mahony & Pastore, 1998).

Research has proven budget and finance decisions to be athletic directors' least favorite aspect of their job responsibilities (Robinson, Peterson, Tedrick, & Carpenter, 2003). The distribution and reduction of resources among teams in an athletic department certainly qualifies as one of the financial dilemmas that athletic directors contend with regularly. Consequently, future athletic directors need to be aware of, and prepared for, the potential dilemmas regarding the distribution of resources in NCAA athletic departments.

The participants in this study are the future leaders of athletic departments and other sports related organizations. Intercollegiate athletics is a logical choice of specialization for many graduate and undergraduate sport management students as sport management programs and athletic departments often have a close relationship through a dually beneficial set of connections. The athletic department has employment and volunteer opportunities, graduate assistant positions, and can get students involved in intercollegiate athletics through many opportunities. Students can gain experience at the constant stream of sporting events or help with the administrative work in areas including compliance, marketing, development, public

relations, and sports information. The overall proximity of an athletic department to a sport management program creates an interwoven relationship which benefits students, faculty, and athletic administrators. The relationship allows the athletic department access to a large pool of graduate assistants, volunteers, and students with an advanced base of knowledge and interest in sport management, while at the same time the students gain valuable sport management experience. Intercollegiate athletics is now one of the most common areas of interest for sport management students. Therefore, sport management students are an important segment of the population to analyze when examining distributive justice in intercollegiate athletics.

While the previous research has focused on the perceptions of current coaches, athletic directors, and athletic board chairs, the current study will build primarily on Mahony et al.'s (2006) study by examining the perceptions of college students. The results will contribute to distributive justice research by examining the differences in perceived fairness among males and females, undergraduate and graduate sport management students, sport management students at Division I and Division III institutions, and students that had and had not previously examined distributive justice in intercollegiate athletics in their sport management classes.

Chapter II—Literature Review

Distributive Justice Principles

The discussion of how resources should be distributed to different teams within the athletic department is one of the common debates when analyzing intercollegiate athletics (Mahoney et al., 2002, Mahony & Pastore, 1998). Therefore, the following distributive principles will be described in terms of an athletic department deciding how to distribute resources. These distributive principles are not unique to collegiate athletics. In fact, they can be adapted to fit most organizations or situations where resources must be allocated to individuals or groups.

Tornblom and Jonsson (1985, 1987) identified the most common methods of distribution as (a) equity, (b) equality, and (c) need. Equity based distributions are based on the principle that those who contribute more to the athletic department should receive more of the resources. Equality based distributions reward teams in the athletic department equally regardless of their contributions. Finally, need based distributions allocate more resources to the teams that the decision makers feel need the resources the most. Tornblom and Jonsson (1985) also listed additional sub principles that could be used when determining how to distribute resources for both equity and equality.

The distributive justice principles and subprinciples that will be evaluated in the current study can be seen in Figure 1. Figure 1 includes Tornblom and Jonsson's (1985, 1987) three primary principles and their subprinciples, and for the purpose of the current study both revenue

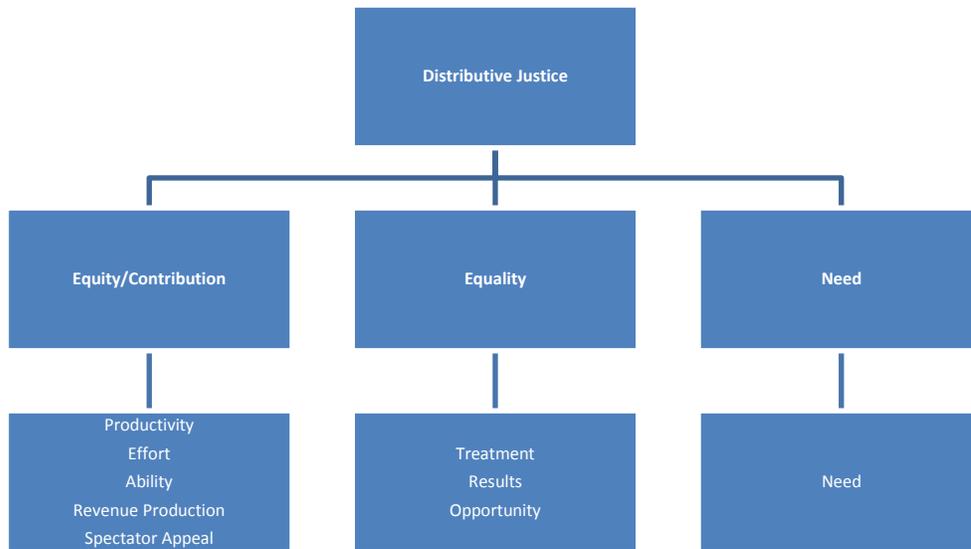


Figure 1- Model of Distributive Justice in Intercollegiate Athletics

production and spectator appeal have been added to the equity sub principle (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994a).

Equity

Using the distributive method of equity, resources are allocated based on the team’s contribution to the athletic department. Equity in distributive justice can be determined by the subprinciples of (a) productivity, (b) effort, or (c) ability (Tornblom & Jonsson, 1985, 1987). For example, a team may get an increase of resources because they have an undefeated season (productivity), work the hardest or practice the most (effort), or have the most skill and are very fun to watch (ability).

Spectator appeal and revenue production have also been identified as equity based subprinciples when examining distributive justice in college athletics (Hums & Chelladurai,

1994b; Mahony et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2006). While spectator appeal and revenue production were not identified in Tornblom and Johnsson's original distributive principles, researchers felt they were important to include because of the ability of certain sports to generate revenue, publicity, and support of the athletic department and the institution as a whole (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b).

Football and basketball at the Division I level are normally the only sports that generate any significant revenue for an athletic department. For this reason, revenue production and spectator appeal based distribution methods are most likely to be implemented at major Division I universities where sports have the ability to generate resources and build the university's reputation (Deutsch, 1975). It has been suggested that major Division I athletic departments follow a corporate model and operate similar to a for-profit business (Mahony et al., 2006; Schneider, 2000). This perspective is particularly interesting taking into consideration that the majority of intercollegiate athletic departments are losing money (Fulks, 2002).

Equality

When the principle of equality is implemented, teams receive the same resources despite differences among their contributions to the organization. Using equality, each team is treated equally but the method of reaching that equality can vary. Distributions using equality can be based on (a) equality of opportunity, (b) equality of results, or (c) equality of treatment (Tornblom & Jonsson, 1985, 1987). The equality based distributive principles are often used in environments where the focus is to cultivate and maintain positive social relations, there is an increased level of cohesion, and there is a communal feeling or common fate within the

organization (Sheppard, Lewicki, & Minton, 1992). Division III schools would be more likely to utilize this type of organizational outlook as economic prosperity is often unrealistic and therefore less emphasized at the Division III level (Mahony & Pastore, 1998).

Using equality of opportunity, each individual or group has the same likelihood of being chosen to receive resources. Random selection is one of the simplest forms of equality of opportunity and can be implemented given that all groups have an equal chance of being selected. Equality of opportunity may be implemented in a situation when there is an open facility for an afternoon. The athletic director could send an e-mail to all coaches and allow the first coach to respond to use the facility that afternoon. This way each team has the same opportunity to use the facility. Another example would be if the athletic director randomly picked a team out of a hat to use the facility for the afternoon.

When equality of results is implemented, there may be some short term inequalities, but ultimately each team will receive the same amount of resources. For example, if the athletic department had a surplus one year that would pay for five teams to receive new equipment then the athletic director could pick five teams that would receive the new equipment. Next time there was a surplus, another group of teams would be chosen to receive the money until all teams had the opportunity to take advantage of the extra money in the budget.

Using the final equality based subprinciple, equality of treatment, in the same situation the money would simply be distributed equally among all of the teams in the athletic department. In a situation where a resource can be divided equally, equality of treatment is a common option. This principle allows resources to be allocated equally among all groups.

Need

The final distribution method, need, relies on the athletic director to identify which team is lacking resources and then distribute resources to those teams accordingly. An overall lack of resources, high program costs, and insufficient resources to be competitive were identified by administrators as the most common reasons teams needed resources (Mahony et al., 2005). Like equality based distributions, need based distributions are often used by Division III athletic departments because of the communal feel of the department and the reliance on the survival of all teams (Mahony et al., 2002).

Research on Distributive Justice in Collegiate Athletic Departments

The allocation of resources within a collegiate athletic department is a common and often controversial debate for sport managers (Mahoney et al., 2002; Mahoney & Pastore, 1998). Researchers have examined distributive justice from many different perspectives of those involved with NCAA athletic departments (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b; Mahony et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2005; Mahony & Pastore, 1998; Mahony et al., 2006; Tornblom & Jonsson, 1985).

Hums and Chelladurai (1994b) examined the views of NCAA coaches and administrators from NCAA affiliated institutions on their views of distributive justice principles. The study examined the coaches' and athletic administrators' views on when eight distributive justice principles should be applied and which were the most just. The results showed that equality of treatment and need were rated the most just distributive principles among all respondents. Equality of results was rated the third most just principle. The remaining four principles

(equality of opportunity and the equity based principles of productivity, effort, ability, and spectator appeal) were all rated relatively unjust (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b).

There were also differences among the groups in the study. The results showed that females rated the equality principles more just than the males, while the males rated the equity principles more just than the females. There was a significant difference between the respondents from different divisions when rating the equity principles based on productivity and spectator appeal. The Division I respondents rated the productivity and spectator appeal principles much more just than the respondents from Division II and III. This is logical because spectator appeal and production can correlate directly with producing more revenue for the athletic department at the Division I level (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b).

Hums and Chelladurai's (1994b) initial study explained that coaches and administrators rated equality of treatment, equality of results, and need the most fair distributive justice principles. Mahony and Pastore (1998) analyzed the NCAA Revenue and Expense Reports from 1973-1993 to determine whether the principles identified by Hums and Chelladurai (1994b) (equality of treatment, need, and equality of results) were actually implemented by athletic departments when distributing resources. Every four years the NCAA releases research that examines revenue and expenses of intercollegiate athletic programs. The studies include statistics related to revenue, expenses, sports offered, grants, participation opportunities, and coaches (Mahony & Pastore, 1998).

The results showed that while the coaches and administrators cited need as one of the most just distributive properties, it was not being implemented when resources were distributed.

Instead of increasing funding to programs in need, those programs were simply being cut from the athletic department. They also showed that at the Division I level equity based on revenue production and spectator appeal was being used more frequently than the equality based principles. Equality was being implemented more among the lower divisions, most likely because of the lack of spectator appeal and revenue production among all sports (Mahony & Pastore, 1998).

Mahony and Pastore (1998) showed there was obviously a disconnect between what distribution principles the administrators thought were most fair and how the resources were actually being distributed. Mahony, Hums, and Riemer (2002) continued to explore the divide between the perceptions of the administrators and their actions while distributing resources. The study built on Hums and Chelladurai's (1994b) instrument and examined the views of athletic directors and athletic board chairs, as opposed to the coaches and administrators used in Hums and Chelladurai's initial research (Mahony et al., 2002).

Again, the results showed that need based distributive principles were strongly supported at all levels. Equality of treatment and equality of results were rated lower than in previous research but were still rated fairer than the other distributive principles except need. It was also noteworthy that Division I administrators rated equity based distribution methods more fair than administrators at the lower levels, supporting Mahony and Pastore's (1998) prior research (Mahony et al., 2002).

Mahony, Riemer, Breeding, and Hums (2006) analyzed what NCAA student-athletes and college students perceived as the most fair distributive properties. Equality of treatment and

need were rated the highest by both the athletes and college students. These results were consistent with the NCAA coaches and administrators surveyed in initial study, and differed slightly from the athletic board chairs who perceived need as more just than all other principles (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b; Mahony et al. 2002).

While research consistently showed that need was rated among the most fair distributive principles, there was still a void in the research pertaining to exactly how administrators determined need among sports. Mahony, Hums, and Reimer (2005) addressed this hole in the literature by conducting a study that attempted to better understand how administrators determined need.

The results indicated that football was generally rated as having the greatest need among sports at the NCAA Division I and III levels, and that administrators felt male sports had more need than female sports. The administrators identified the most common forms of need as circumstances when sports lacked resources, had high program costs, or lacked resources to a point that they could not be competitive (Mahony et al., 2005).

Previous research has shown that equality of treatment, equality of results, and need were generally rated the most fair while equity based principles and equality of opportunity were the lowest rated principles. Although the equity based principles were generally rated unfair, the Division I participants rated them as more fair than their counterparts at the lower Divisions, which is no surprise because of the ability of Division I sports to generate revenue and prestige at a much larger scale for an institution.

The current study follows in the footsteps of the previous research and will contribute to the distributive justice research by adding a new, useful, group of participants whose perceptions have not been examined or discussed. The current study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What distribution/retribution principles do sport management students perceive to be most fair?
2. What principles do the sport management students believe they would implement in a distribution/retribution situation?
3. Are there differences on the perceived fairness of distributive justice principles between different groups of collegiate sport management students?
 - a. Are there differences between male and female sport management students regarding their perceptions of fairness of distributive justice principles?
 - b. Are there differences between sport management students at Division I and Division III institutions regarding their perceptions of fairness of distributive justice principles?
 - c. Are there differences between graduate and undergraduate sport management students regarding their perceptions of fairness of distributive justice principles?
 - d. Are there differences between students who have and those who have not previously examined distributive justice in sport management classes regarding their perceptions of fairness of distributive justice principles?

Chapter III—Method

Participants

The sample (N= 112) for the current study consisted of 60 (53.6%) undergraduate students and 52 (46.4%) graduate students enrolled in North American Society of Sport Management (NASSM) recognized sport management programs at colleges and universities in the United States. Of the respondents, 45 (40.2%) were female and 67 (59.8%) were male. There were 74 (66.1%) respondents from Division I programs, 3 (2.7%) from Division II, and 35 (31.2%) from Division III. The majority of respondents, 104 (92.9%) were currently sport management majors while 8 (7.1%) of the participants were not currently sport management majors but had been enrolled in at least one sport management class. As for the question of whether the students had previously examined distributive justice in intercollegiate athletics, 70 (62.5%) of the respondents had discussed distributive justice in their sport management classes while 42 (37.5%) of the respondents had not.

Instrument

The questionnaire used in this study built on the scale developed by Hums and Chelladurai (1994a) with some modifications (see Appendix 1). First, the current study focuses solely on the distribution/retribution of financial resources. Prior research has also included analysis on the fairness of distribution/retribution of facilities and support services (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994a; Mahony et al., 2006). The allocation of financial resources was used exclusively in this study because the inequality of finances among teams is often more controversial and difficult to disguise (Mahony et al., 2002).

Second, revenue production and spectator appeal were added as distributive justice methods under the equity/contribution based principles. Hums and Chelladurai (1994b) suggested the inclusion of revenue production for future studies in their initial distributive justice study on NCAA coaches and administrators. The ability for certain teams to generate revenue within an athletic department legitimizes the inclusion of equity based principles of revenue production and spectator appeal in the current research (Mahony & Pastore, 1998).

Third, the current study examined students currently enrolled in sport management classes instead of administrators, coaches, athletic directors, athletic board chairs, and student athletes as in prior research (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b; Mahony et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2006). While current sport management students may not currently be in control of the finances of an athletic department, there is a good possibility that many future decision makers will come from the population of students presently enrolled in sport management programs across the country. In order to analyze differences among the participants, the instrument included questions pertaining to gender, student classification, NCAA Division, and familiarity with distributive justice in intercollegiate athletics.

The participants were given two basic scenarios, one where a surplus of funds created a distribution scenario and another where there was a reduction of financial resources. Each scenario was followed by nine statements describing a different principle of how the money could be distributed. The scenarios and examples of the principles were similar to those implemented by Mahony et al. (2002) but were modified to fit the current study. The participants were asked to rate the fairness of each of the nine principles on a seven point Likert-

type scale anchored by *very unfair* (1) to *very fair* (7). Unlike Hums and Chelladurai's questionnaire, the respondents were asked to judge the *fairness*, instead of the *justness*, of distribution and retribution scenarios as Mahony et al. (2006) hypothesized that *fair* is universally better understood than its synonym *just*. After having the respondents rate the fairness of the nine distribution/retribution principles, the survey asked the participants to choose the single option they would implement in the scenario.

The nine principles evaluated in terms of fairness by respondents were (a) equity/contribution based principles, which included productivity, spectator appeal, effort, ability, and revenue production; (b) equality principles, which included equality of treatment, equality of results, and equality of opportunity; and (c) need (one principle only).

Procedures

Human subjects approval was obtained prior to data collection (see Appendix 2). The participating institutions were selected from the sport management programs listed on the NASSM Web site (North American Society for Sport Management, n.d.). Programs were selected based on NCAA membership and sport management focused curriculum. Thirty six sport management department heads were contacted with an explanation of the purpose of the survey, a test link for the questionnaire, and a separate e-mail the department head could forward to their students that contained a brief introduction and a link to the questionnaire. A confirmation was received from 12 department heads that they would forward the survey to their sport management students. Participation by the sport management students was voluntary.

Data Analysis

Several analyses were carried out in order to address several research questions. First, the means and standard deviations of all the variables were calculated. Then the average rating of each distributive principle was analyzed according to group membership. T-tests analyzing group membership according to gender, student classification, NCAA division, and familiarity with distributive justice were undertaken. The results were analyzed for both distribution and retribution scenarios.

As noted in the literature, each of the nine principles could be classified as a form of equality, equity, or need. For the next set of analyses, each principle was grouped based on their distributive justice principle. There were five equity based principles (revenue production, effort, spectator appeal, productivity, and ability), three equality based principles (equality of treatment, equality of results, and equality of opportunity), and the single need based principle. Similar to the previous test, the averages of the equity, equality, and need based principles were analyzed according to group membership in order to distinguish any significant differences among groups. Both distributive and retributive scenarios were examined.

In addition, respondents were instructed to choose one of the nine principles that they would personally implement if they were the athletic director at an NCAA institution in charge of distributing and reducing resources. A frequency analysis was employed in order to examine the results from this component of the study.

Chapter IV—Results

A general summary of means and standard deviations of the distributive justice principles are provided in Table 1. The overall ratings for the distributive justice principles highlighted several important findings. First, need was rated the most fair allocation principle in both distribution and retribution scenarios. Second, equality of treatment and equity based on revenue production were the next highest rated variables in both scenarios. Third, equality of opportunity was the lowest rated distributive principle in both distributive and retributive situations. In the retribution scenario, equality of opportunity's mean rating was a 1.99, the only principle to fall below a 2.0 overall rating in overall averages. This indicates a relatively strong rejection of the principle. Equity based on ability was the second lowest rated in both scenarios as well.

Finally, although slight variances can be found between individual principles' distribution and retribution ratings, there was basically no difference between the overall ratings of the distribution and retribution scenarios. The average rating for the principles in the distributive scenario was 3.73 while the average rating for all principles in the retributive scenario was 3.69.

Effects of Group Membership on Individual Principles

Means and standard deviations for the nine distributive justice principles in both situations by gender, student classification, division, and prior exposure to distributive justice are provided in Table 2. Equality of treatment and need were generally rated highest by groups in both scenarios with the revenue production principle generally rated third highest. Equality of opportunity was universally rejected and rated the lowest by all groups in both scenarios.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Distributive Justice Principles

	Scenario	Mean	Standard Deviation
Equity/revenue production	Dist	4.46	1.53
	Ret	4.47	1.70
Equity/effort	Dist	3.59	1.58
	Ret	3.53	1.51
Equity/spectator appeal	Dist	3.69	1.54
	Ret	4.02	1.50
Equity/productivity	Dist	3.43	1.49
	Ret	3.35	1.47
Equity/ability	Dist	2.77	1.41
	Ret	2.86	1.13
Need	Dist	5.07	1.37
	Ret	4.79	1.53
Equality/treatment	Dist	4.83	2.04
	Ret	4.66	1.91
Equality/results	Dist	3.44	1.79
	Ret	3.56	1.69
Equality/opportunity	Dist	2.26	1.55
	Ret	1.99	1.41

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Individual Principles by Group Membership

		Gender		Class		NCAA Division		Distributive Justice	
		Male	Female	UG	Grad	D-I	D-III	Yes	No
Equity/revenue production	Dist	4.76 ^b (1.47)	4.00 ^c (1.52)	4.43 ^c (1.53)	4.48 ^c (1.54)	4.49 ^c (1.56)	4.51 ^c (1.44)	4.43 ^c (1.46)	4.50 ^c (1.66)
	Ret	4.58 ^b (1.75)	4.31 ^c (1.64)	4.40 ^c (1.75)	4.56 ^b (1.66)	4.61 ^b (1.62)	4.31 ^c (1.88)	4.49 ^c (1.62)	4.45 ^c (1.86)
Equity/effort	Dist	3.72 (1.63)	3.40 (1.50)	3.80 (1.50)	3.35 (1.64)	3.42 (1.57)	3.94 (1.59)	3.46 (1.57)	3.81 (1.60)
	Ret	3.60 (1.55)	3.42 (1.45)	3.65 (1.52)	3.38 (1.50)	3.46 (1.47)	3.66 (1.61)	3.47 (1.48)	3.62 (1.58)
Equity/spectator appeal	Dist	3.78 (1.57)	3.56 (1.52)	3.85 (1.51)	3.50 (1.58)	3.73 (1.55)	3.66 (1.55)	3.77 (1.55)	3.55 (1.53)
	Ret	4.00 (1.48)	4.04 (1.55)	4.08 (1.58)	3.94 (1.42)	4.04 (1.48)	3.94 (1.59)	4.07 (1.50)	3.93 (1.52)
Equity/productivity	Dist	3.36 (1.58)	3.53 (1.36)	3.58 (1.49)	3.25 (1.49)	3.61 (1.47)	3.11 (1.55)	3.50 (1.56)	3.31 (1.39)
	Ret	3.33 (1.54)	3.38 (1.37)	3.60 (1.51)	3.06 (1.38)	3.31 (1.50)	3.43 (1.48)	3.37 (1.49)	3.31 (1.46)
Equity/ability	Dist	2.64 (1.31)	2.96 (1.54)	2.73 (1.31)	2.81 (1.52)	2.89 (1.54)	2.57 (1.09)	2.84 (1.43)	2.64 (1.38)
	Ret	2.78 (1.15)	2.98 (1.10)	2.93 (1.13)	2.77 (1.13)	2.78 (1.11)	2.97 (1.18)	2.91 (1.15)	2.76 (1.10)
Need	Dist	5.25 ^a (1.34)	4.80 ^b (1.39)	5.17 ^a (1.49)	4.96 ^a (1.24)	4.96 ^a (1.41)	5.29 ^b (1.32)	5.01 ^a (1.35)	5.17 ^a (1.43)
	Ret	4.94 ^a (1.54)	4.56 ^b (1.52)	4.62 ^b (1.73)	4.98 ^a (1.26)	4.89 ^a (1.43)	4.66 ^b (1.66)	4.89 ^a (1.59)	4.62 ^a (1.43)
Equality/treatment	Dist	4.70 ^c (1.97)	5.02 ^a (2.15)	5.10 ^b (1.97)	4.52 ^b (2.09)	4.58 ^b (2.15)	5.34 ^a (1.75)	4.70 ^b (2.06)	5.05 ^b (2.01)
	Ret	4.48 ^c (1.94)	4.93 ^a (1.84)	4.80 ^a (1.95)	4.50 ^c (1.86)	4.47 ^c (1.95)	5.14 ^a (1.72)	4.71 ^b (1.96)	4.57 ^b (1.82)
Equality/results	Dist	3.34 (1.90)	3.58 (1.63)	3.63 (1.86)	3.21 (1.70)	3.20 (1.69)	3.83 (1.98)	3.20 (1.81)	3.83 (1.71)
	Ret	3.63 (1.83)	3.47 (1.47)	3.73 (1.72)	3.37 (1.66)	3.41 (1.67)	3.91 (1.70)	3.50 (1.68)	3.67 (1.73)
Equality/opportunity	Dist	2.33 (1.63)	2.16 (1.45)	2.68 (1.68)	1.77 (1.23)	2.01 (1.41)	2.69 (1.78)	2.17 (1.49)	2.40 (1.65)
	Ret	2.00 (1.49)	1.98 (1.29)	2.37 (1.50)	1.56 (1.16)	1.74 (2.46)	2.46 (1.52)	1.90 (1.44)	2.14 (1.35)

Note. Dist = Distribution Scenario; Ret = Retribution Scenario.

^aTop-ranked principle in respective group and scenario. ^bSecond-ranked principle in respective group and scenario.

^cThird-ranked principle in respective group and scenario.

When the results were analyzed by group, significant differences were identified based on gender, NCAA division, and student classification. The only groups that showed no differences were the participants who had and the participants who had not previously examined distributive justice in NCAA athletics. Although no significant differences were found, the means and standard deviations in the two groups are included in Table 2. Due to the lack of useful differences among the groups, the results will not be analyzed in depth in the results or discussion.

Gender

Overall, males and females rated the principles similarly in both scenarios. Females rated equality of treatment most fair, need based distributions second, and equity based on revenue third. The men rated need most fair, equity based revenue production second highest, and equality of treatment the third highest. Equality of opportunity was rated lowest by both men and women in both scenarios.

The revenue production principle in distributive situations was the only principle that had a significant difference ($t = -2.65$, $p < .05$) between males (4.76) and females (4.0). Men rated the equity based revenue production principle highest out of any group.

NCAA Division

Both Division I and Division III students rated equality of opportunity as the lowest rated principle. Although both rated equality of opportunity generally unfair, Division III respondents

rated it significantly (Distribution: $t = -2.13$, $p < .05$; Retribution: $t = -2.53$, $p < .05$) more fair than the Division I respondents. The Division III sport management students rated equality of opportunity 2.69 and 2.46 while the Division I respondents averages were 2.01 and 1.74 for the distribution and retribution scenarios. This was the only significant difference between the participants at different NCAA Divisions.

Overall, Division I respondents rated the need principle most fair and equality of treatment second. The Division III students had the reverse with equality of treatment rated the most fair and need rated second. Both groups rated equity based on ability and equality based on opportunity the least fair principles.

Student Classification

Again, equality of opportunity was the lowest rated overall and produced a difference between groups. In fact, the graduate students' ratings of equality of opportunity were among the lowest ratings for a single principle by any group. As a result, the undergraduates rated equality of opportunity significantly (Distribution: $t = 3.24$, $p < .05$; Retribution: $t = 3.16$, $p < .05$) higher than their graduate counterparts in both scenarios. In the distribution and retribution scenarios undergraduates rated equality of opportunity 2.68 and 2.37 verses the ratings of 1.77 and 1.56 by the graduate students.

In the distribution scenario both undergraduate and graduate students rated need highest and equality of treatment as the second highest principles. In the retribution scenario, undergraduates rated quality of treatment as most fair and need second. The graduate students rated need highest and the equity based revenue production as the second highest principle.

Undergraduates also showed a propensity to rate the allocation methods as more fair overall, as they rated 14 of the 18 principles higher than the graduate students.

Effects of Group Membership on Grouped Principles

The overall ratings of the three groups of equity (five principles), equality (three principles) and need (one principle) can be found in Table 3, while the grouped principle’s ratings according to gender, student classification, division, and prior exposure to distributive justice are provided in Table 4. Overall, the results showed that the principle of need was rated considerably higher than both of the grouped principles of equity and equality.

Again, when the results were analyzed by the respondents’ answer to the question of whether or not they had previously examined distributive justice in NCA athletics there were no significant differences or noteworthy trends in the responses. The means and standard deviations can be found in Table 4 but due to the lack of differences among the groups, the results will not be analyzed further in the results or discussion of the current article.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for Grouped Distributive Justice Principles

Principle		Mean	Std. Deviation
Equity	Dist	3.59	1.01
	Ret	3.65	1.02
Equality	Dist	3.51	1.35
	Ret	3.41	1.23
Need	Dist	5.07	1.37
	Ret	4.79	1.53

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of the Grouped Distributive Justice Principles by Group Membership

		Gender		Class		Division		DJ	
		M	F	UG	Grad	I	III	Yes	No
Equity	Dist	3.65 (0.98)	3.49 (1.04)	3.68 (0.85)	3.48 (1.16)	3.63 (1.067)	3.67 (0.88)	3.60 (1.00)	3.56 (1.030)
	Ret	3.66 (1.04)	3.63 (1.01)	3.73 (1.06)	3.54 (0.98)	3.64 (0.99)	3.66 (1.11)	3.66 (0.95)	3.61 (1.15)
Need	Dist	5.25 (1.34)	4.80 (1.39)	5.17 (1.49)	4.96 (1.24)	4.96 (1.41)	5.29 (1.32)	5.01 (1.35)	5.17 (1.43)
	Ret	4.94 (1.54)	4.56 (1.52)	4.62 (1.73)	4.98 (1.26)	4.89 (1.43)	4.66 (1.66)	4.89 (1.59)	4.62 (1.43)
Equality	Dist	3.46 (1.42)	3.59 (1.24)	3.81 (1.37)	3.17 (1.24)	3.27 (1.34)	3.95 (1.28)	3.36 (1.34)	3.76 (1.33)
	Ret	3.37 (1.32)	3.26 (1.09)	3.63 (1.26)	3.14 (1.15)	3.21 (1.21)	3.84 (1.16)	3.37 (1.26)	3.46 (1.20)

Gender

When the individual principles were grouped according to their general distributive principle, males rated need more fair than females in both scenarios but the differences were not statistically significant. Although the males rated need higher than females, the need based principle was rated the most fair by both males and females in both scenarios. The male and female ratings for the equity and equality based principles were generally similar otherwise.

NCAA Division

Division III respondents rated the equality group of principles significantly (Distribution: $t = -2.53, p < .05$; Retribution: $t = -2.57, p < .05$) higher the Division I students surveyed in both

scenarios. In the distributive and retribution scenarios, Division III students rated the equality principles 3.95 and 3.84, while the Division I ratings were 3.27 and 3.21 respectively.

There was an interesting deviation when analyzing the Division III participants' ratings on the need based principle. The Division III respondents rated the need based principle a high 5.29 in the distributive situation, but in the retributive situation their average rating fell to 4.66. The Division I respondents showed less variation in their ratings of need, the results showed averages of 4.96 average in the distribution situation and 4.89 in the retribution situation.

Student Classification

Undergraduates rated the equality group of principles significantly (Distribution: $t = 2.57$, $p < .05$; Retribution: $t = 2.15$, $p < .05$) higher than graduate level respondents in both scenarios. Undergraduates rated the equality principles 3.81 (distributive) and 3.63 (retributive) while the graduates averages were 3.17 (distributive) and 3.14 (retributive). The need based principle was the highest rated of the grouped principles by both graduate and undergraduate students.

As with the individual principles, the results showed a tendency by the undergraduates to award higher ratings in general. The undergraduates rated five out of the six grouped principles higher than the graduate students. The only exception was for the need based retribution scenario.

Choice of Principle in a Situation

Need was the most frequently selected distributive justice principle by participants to implement for both the distribution and retribution of resources. Equality of treatment and equity based revenue production were second and third most selected principles in both

scenarios. These three choices were the overwhelming choices for respondents, accounting for 91.1% of the distribution choices and 82.1% of the retribution choices. The frequencies of the subjects' choices in the retribution and distribution scenarios are presented in Table 5.

Several of the choices were not chosen by any of the 112 respondents. In the distribution scenario, the two equity based distributive principles of effort and productivity were ignored and not chosen by a single respondent. Equity based on ability and equality of opportunity were both picked once, while equality of results had two respondents indicate that would be their choice of an allocation principle to implement.

For the retribution scenario, only equity based on ability was not selected by any participants. Equality of opportunity was selected once, equality of productivity was selected twice, and equity based on effort was selected by three subjects. The retribution scenario included twenty responses that were spread out among the principles outside of the top three. That doubled the ten responses outside of the top three principles in the distribution scenario.

Table 6 and Table 7 show the results of the principles picked to implement in each distributive situation divided by group membership. Males, Division I respondents, and the participants that were familiar with distributive justice all had a disproportionately higher number of participants than their counterparts. Therefore, differences among the groups were difficult to distinguish. Upon examination, there was still one noteworthy result between certain groups when asked to implement a single principle. Need received the most votes by all groups in both scenarios except for the Division III respondents in the distribution scenario and

Table 5. Overall Choices of Allocation Principles

	Distribution		Retribution	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Equity/revenue production	24	21.4	24	21.4
Equity/effort	0	0	3	2.7
Equity/spectator Appeal	6	5.4	7	6.3
Equity/productivity	0	0	2	1.8
Equity/ability	1	.9	0	0
Need	45	40.2	41	36.6
Equality/treatment	33	29.5	27	24.1
Equality/results	2	1.8	7	6.3
Equality/opportunity	1	.9	1	.9
Total	112	100.0	112	100.0

Table 6. Differences Among Groups in the Implementation of Distribution Principles

	Gender		Class		Division		Dist. Justice	
	Female	Male	UG	Grad	DI	DIII	Yes	No
Equity/revenue production	8	16	8	16	17	6	13	11
Equity/effort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Equity/spectator appeal	4	2	4	2	3	3	4	2
Equity/productivity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Equity/ability	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Need	16	29	25	20	32	11	30	15
Equality/treatment	15	18	21	12	18	15	20	13
Equality/results	1	1	0	2	2	0	2	0
Equality/opportunity	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Total	45	67	60	52	74	35	70	42

Table 7. Differences Among Groups in the Implementation of Retribution Principles

	Gender		Class		Division		Dist. Justice	
	Female	Male	UG	Grad	DI	DIII	Yes	No
Equity/revenue production	8	16	11	13	16	7	13	11
Equity/effort	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	2
Equity/spectator appeal	5	2	5	2	3	3	6	1
Equity/productivity	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	2
Equity/ability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Need	13	28	21	20	30	10	27	14
Equality/treatment	17	10	15	12	17	10	18	9
Equality/results	0	7	4	3	4	3	4	3
Equality/opportunity	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Total	45	67	60	52	74	35	70	42

the females in the retribution scenario. In both cases, equality of treatment was selected most frequently and need was still the second most picked principle to implement.

Chapter V—Discussion

The current article used two scenarios to further examination distributive justice in intercollegiate athletics. The results of the current study provide answers to each of the research questions outlined earlier. First, despite occasional differences, the results showed overwhelming support for need and equality of treatment and general disapproval for the equality of opportunity principle. Second, the principles of need, equality of treatment, and equity based on revenue production were the overwhelming favorites for the choice a single principle to implement at an institution. Finally, although there were differences among certain groups, the results showed a general similarity between groups on their perceived fairness among the distributive principles. The few differences that did occur between groups were generally consistent with previous research and are explained and addressed in the following discussion.

Fairness of the Principles

The first research question asked what college sport management students perceived to be the fairest methods of distribution and retribution in NCAA athletic departments. The results clearly showed need and equality of treatment were rated as the most fair allocation methods overall. Regardless of group membership, need and equality of treatment were rated the most fair. The high ratings for need and equality of treatment are consistent with previous research (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b; Mahony et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2006). The results also showed overwhelming support for need and equality of treatment when the respondents were asked to pick a single allocation method to implement. The consistency between the high ratings

and frequency of implementation strengthens the evidence that need and equality of treatment are considered the most fair distributive justice principles.

These results can be viewed as positive for individuals in favor of equal distributions among teams in NCAA athletic departments (Mahony et al., 2006). The subjects in this survey are the next generation of decision-makers in the realm of sport, and if their high ratings for equality and need are an indicator of how they will distribute resources in the future, then college athletics will continue to strive towards equality.

While illustrating a continued move towards equality, the results could also have a potentially problematic effect on the distribution process in the future of intercollegiate athletics. This could stem from the prevailing use of need, and its subjective nature, to make decisions in distributive justice situations. An athletic director could be faced with a situation where a tennis coach argues he “needs” his own office to do work, a football coach contends he “needs” a new office to use for recruiting, and a basketball coach also “needs” a new office for his assistant coaches. Using the need based distribution method the decision would be fairly subjective and places a considerable amount of power in the hands of the decision-maker. This could create a situation where the athletic director has certain biases and continually determines that the same teams need more shares of the resources. The athletic director’s bias for or against a certain team could be conscious or subconscious, but either way it could have a significant effect of on allocation of resources if the need based principle is implemented. The additional distribution methods that could be considered subjective, equity based on effort and equity based on ability, were rated unfair by the respondents in the study. It is also worth noting that the equity based on

effort and equity based on ability were both among the least picked principles when participants were asked to choose a single distribution method. The discussion of subjective versus objective distribution principles is an interesting possibility, and could have implications for future research (Mahony, et al., 2002).

Equity based on revenue production was the third highest rated principle overall. This comes as a bit of a surprise as prior research found equality of results as the next highest rated principle after need and equality of treatment (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994b; Mahony et al., 2002). According to Hums and Chelladurai (1994b), any rating of less than four on a seven point scale is rated relatively unjust. In the current study need, equality of treatment, and equity based on revenue production all had averages well above four on the seven point scale for both scenarios. The only other principle ranked above four was the equity based on spectator appeal in the retribution scenario, which received a rating of 4.02. The remaining principles were rated as relatively unfair.

Equality of opportunity, or random selection, was consistently rated the lowest of all distributive principles. Although it was consistently rated the most unfair principle, significant differences did arise between several groups. The general dissatisfaction with the principle may have stemmed from the operationalization of the variable. In the survey, equality of opportunity was operationalized as choosing to distribute or reduce resources based on a random selection. The results in the current study and previous research have proven the random based equality of opportunity variable is generally rated as unfair. Since it random selection has been consistently rejected, future research may want to operationalize the equality of opportunity with another

scenario where groups have an equal opportunity when resources are being allocated. Additional recommendations pertaining to the equality of opportunity principle are included in the in the conclusion of the current study.

Theoretical Implications

Previous research commends coaches, athletic directors, athletic board chairs, athletic administrators, and student-athletes for supporting the principles of need and equality of treatment. While need and equality of treatment are certainly rated the most fair by current and future decision makers, previous research has neglected the discussion of whether or not these highly rated principles are realistic responses. The high ratings of need and equality of treatment are inconsistent with actual decisions of administrators. These inconsistencies among the high ratings and actual implementations have been overlooked and could have significant theoretical implications.

When NCAA expense and revenue reports were analyzed, the results showed that neither equality of treatment nor need was actually being implemented at NCAA institutions (Mahony & Pastore, 1998). The results clearly explained that the actual distributions among teams were “inconsistent with the use of need as the general principle used to make distributions and retributions” and that “equality is often ignored when making these decisions” (Mahony & Pastore, 1998, p. 148-149). The most implemented principles by athletic departments were based on revenue production and spectator appeal.

Instead of actually implementing the need based principle and increasing resources to a needy team, athletic departments (particularly at the Division I level) show a tendency to simply

eliminate the needy team from the program. This is particularly prevalent when a non-revenue team is considered in need. Mahony and Pastore (1998) indicate that athletic administrators “would rather eliminate men’s nonrevenue sport teams than take opportunities away from men’s revenue sport teams” (p. 139). This clearly shows that while athletic administrators feel that need is generally the fairest principle, in real situations it is not implemented.

Similar to need, equality of treatment was rated as one of the fairest distributive principles, but in reality, it is seldom implemented. Research has shown that legislation such as Title IX or the Civil Rights Legislation Act, and not the desire of athletic administrators, has created the only significant movement towards equality in collegiate athletics (Mahony & Pastore, 1999). Athletic departments have been moving towards equality in order to fulfill requirements set forth in legislation in order to avoid penalties and litigation, not for the sake of equality (Mahony & Pastore, 1999). The high ratings for equality of treatment among sport management students may stem from classes stressing importance on compliance with Title IX and equality within athletic departments.

Finally, the considerably higher ratings for allocations based on revenue production among sport management students compared to athletic administrators may come from an increased level of candor and honesty. The athletic administrators examined in previous research filled out surveys by hand while currently serving in a position that was closely related with the distribution of resources (Hums & Chelladurai, 1994; Mahony et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2006). For this reason, it is possible that they felt that awarding high ratings to the equity based principles would seem unethical or unprofessional due to the emphasis on equality in

intercollegiate athletics. Sport management students, on the other hand, were not currently involved in the allocation process in any way and participated via an online survey. The increased level of anonymity and the lack of professional repercussions for sport management students could have led to the higher, and more truthful, ratings of the equity based on revenue production principle.

The current study found that the principles of need, equality of treatment, and revenue production were consistently rated the fairest principles in hypothetical situations. Previous research explained that the principles of need and equality of treatment are rarely, if ever, implemented in actual situations. Instead, administrators in athletic departments are distributing resources based on revenue production. Therefore, the conclusion can be made that need and equality of treatment are the ideal principles to implement, in theory, but in real life distributive situations revenue production would be the distribution method of choice.

Gender

Overall the ratings from males and females were similar to previous research with need and equality of treatment consistently rated the most fair distributive justice principles. One interesting difference between the current study and Mahony et al. (2002) was that need based scenarios were not rated the most fair by all groups in the current study. Equality of treatment was the highest rated principle by female respondents in both scenarios. Females also selected the equality of treatment principle the most popular principle to implement in the retribution scenario when the need based principle was the most frequency selected principle by most groups in both situations. These results are very interesting for many reasons.

First, they uphold the equality-contribution hypothesis that indicates females are more likely to distribute resources based on equality while men favor the equity principles (Olejnik, Tompkins, & Heinbuck, 1982; Reis & Jackson, 1981). It is logical that female respondents would be more likely to choose the equality based principles due to the relative lack of emphasis on revenue production and spectator appeal for female sports.

Second, these results upheld the hypothesis that males would rate revenue production as a significantly more fair distribution principle than females. This difference on the perceived fairness of revenue production was the only significant difference between the males and females in the individual principles. Among all groups, the males rated the revenue production the most fair in the distribution scenario, and second highest in the retribution scenario (second to Division I respondents). Male sports have been proven to be more likely to produce revenue at an NCAA institution, so male respondents' tendency to rate the revenue production as more fair than their female counterparts is logical.

Mahony et al. (1998) hypothesized that male revenue sport athletes are used to having a larger share of the distributions and fewer budget reductions. Therefore, a movement away from equity and towards true equality would result in fewer resources distributed to, and more resources cut from, the male revenue sports. Although there was no variable to designate an athlete, or even more specifically a revenue sport athlete, the results of the current study uphold the theory that males would rate the equity based principles more fair while females would rate the equality based principles fairer.

Division

The analysis of the Division I and Division III respondents yielded interesting results. First, when the principles were analyzed individually, the Division III respondents rated equality of treatment as the fairest principle. This is interesting because the majority of groups rated the need based principle highest. This is consistent with Mahony and Pastore (1998), who found that equality was used more at the Division III level, while equity based on revenue production and spectator appeal was more likely to be implemented at the Division I level. Second, the Division III respondents rated the grouped equality based principles significantly higher than the Division I respondents in both scenarios, again upholding previous research explaining that equality is generally implemented at the Division III level. Furthermore, when the participants were asked to pick a principle to implement in each scenario, the Division III respondents selected equality of treatment more frequently than all other principles in the distributive scenario. This was fascinating because need was the overwhelming choice for groups in both scenarios. Again, this contributes to the research by confirming that Division III institutions view equality based distributions as more fair than at the Division I level (Mahony et al., 2002).

Although Division III respondents rated equality principles fairer, the results from the current study did not uphold the results from Mahony and Pastore (1998) and Mahony et al. (2002) that Division I respondents were more likely to rate contribution based principles higher than the Division III participants. In the non grouped principles, there were 10 total responses regarding equity based principles (five principles in two scenarios). Each division rated five of the scenarios fairer than their counterpart, creating an equal division and contradicting previous

research. For the grouped principles, the results also showed that NCAA division membership had basically no impact on the ratings of the equity based principles. This could show that even at the Division III level sport management students are aware of the importance of certain sports to the success of the athletic department as a whole.

Student Classification

The results according to student classification showed that the undergraduates rated the principle of equality of opportunity and the grouped equality principles significantly higher than their graduate counterparts. The results also showed that undergraduates had a tendency to have higher ratings on average than graduate students, rating fourteen of eighteen individual principles higher and five of the six grouped principles higher.

There was an interesting discrepancy between the undergraduates' ratings of need in the distributive and retributive scenarios. The undergraduates showed the largest jump in fairness rating between scenarios for the same principle in the results of the study. In the distributive scenario need was rated a 5.17 but in the retribution scenario the fairness rating dropped to a 4.62. In the same two scenarios, the graduate respondents' ratings averaged 4.96 and 4.98. This could show a propensity by the undergraduates to believe that it is ok to distribute resources based on need, but not to take away resources based on the same principle. This apparent sensitivity to need in different distributive scenarios should be explored in future research.

There has not been any previous research on the views of graduate and undergraduate students on their perceptions of distributive justice. Therefore, these results should be

considered with future research to analyze the differences among the perceptions of undergraduate and graduate students.

Conclusion

Although there were occasional differences, the results were rather consistent as a whole. Need and equality of treatment were rated the most fair and equality based on opportunity was universally rejected by all groups. Mahony et al. (2006) theorizes that the generally similar results could be due to the fairly homogenous characteristics of college students. They tend to have a narrow age range and come from similar educational and social backgrounds.

The results did show a propensity for members of Division III institutions and undergraduates to rate the equality principles more fairly than the Division I and graduate student participants. Males also favored equity based principles (specifically based on revenue production) while females favored equality. The division differences can be explained due to substantial differences in the operation of athletic departments at the Division I and Division III levels. The gender differences pertaining to revenue production are most likely due to self interest, and the decreased emphasis on revenue production for female sports.

Overall, the current study found that college students were not very different from athletic directors, coaches, athletic board chairs, and college athletes in their perceptions of fairness of various distribution principles. While differences were found, all groups were similar in their evaluation of need and equality of treatment as the fairest distributive principles. Analysis of the results along with previous research instigated the discussion that need and equality of treatment are idealistic principles, which would be implemented in theory but are not

applied in actual situations. The principles of revenue production and spectator appeal are more realistic choices for implementation in actual distribution situations within an athletic department.

While the findings of the current study did further advance our understanding of the perceived fairness of distributive justice principles, there were limitations. First, the principle of equality based on opportunity raised many questions when analyzed. The results showed an overall disapproval of the principle, but there were many differences among the groups on the rating of the principle. Equality of opportunity was operationalized in the survey as a random selection by the athletic director. While random selection is one possibility of implementing the equality of opportunity principle, any situation where each group has an equal chance to be selected can be operationalized as the equality of opportunity. In future research it may be worth designating random selection its own principle in the equality group while operationalizing the equality of opportunity principle differently.

Another principle that could be included in future research would be the method of distribution or retribution by equal percentages. This principle is similar to the equality of treatment principle in that all teams would be treated similarly, but the amount allocated for each team would be based on the team's current budget, not based on the resources available. The questionnaire used in the study contained an option for respondents to leave any comments. There were numerous comments by participants explaining that some type of equal treatment based on percentages would have been the ideal principle for distributive or retributive

situations. Thus, equality based on percentages of the existing team budgets should be included in future distributive justice research.

The sample used in the survey was useful in distinguishing differences between groups but did have limitations. The sample included a disproportional number of males (67) to females (45), Division I (74) to Division III (35) students, and students familiar with distributive justice (70) to those who were not (42) in the population examined. The only group membership that was comparable was undergraduate (60) and graduate students (52). While the group membership was be useful when analyzing the fairness of the ratings, when the participants were asked to pick a single distribution method to implement, the group memberships could not be analyzed effectively.

It is worth nothing that the results from this study only showed college students' perceptions of fairness of the various distribution methods in a nonspecific situation. None of the distribution principles are inherently right or wrong, and each could be successfully implemented in the right organizational or business setting. The goals of any organization need to be considered when determining between distributive justice principles (Mahony et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2006). Equity based principles are more likely to be used in a sales or business settings while equality or need based principles are more likely to be used in organizations where there is a communal environment and all components of the organization need to function effectively in order to be successful. Although all collegiate athletic departments function within the educational setting, there are substantial differences regarding the distribution models implemented by institutions within the three NCAA divisions. Division I institutions are more

likely conform to a business model where the equity principles are implemented due to the likelihood of certain sports generating resources and prestige for the institution and athletic department. In contrast, Division III institutions are more concerned with the survival of all teams and facets of the organization and therefore, are more likely to use the need and equality based principles.

The significant finding of this study was that college sport management students perceive the principles of need and equality of treatment as the most fair. All other principles in the study were rated relatively unfair, particularly equality based on opportunity, which was the lowest rated principle. Although rated most fair, the principles of need and equality of treatment seem to be more idealistic than realistic, as they are not implemented in actual distributive situations. Equity based on revenue production was consistently the third highest rated principle and has been proven a more realistic principle implemented in actual distributive situations within athletic departments. Future research should continue to investigate the perceptions of current and future decision makers in collegiate athletics. While it is important to analyze what principles are rated the most fair, future research also needs to further investigate differences between the perceptions of fairness and the distributive justice principles that are implemented in intercollegiate athletic departments.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

You are being invited to participate in this study by responding to the following questionnaire. The questionnaire items address your perceptions of fairness concerning distributive justice methods within NCAA Athletic Departments. The survey will take approximately five minutes to complete. The completion and submission of this survey indicates your informed consent to participate in this study. The confidentiality of your responses will be maintained and your identity will not be revealed in any published reports of the results of the survey. Thank you for your participation.

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

What is your current student classification?

- Undergraduate
- Graduate

Are you currently a sport management major?

- Yes
- No
- Undeclared

Have you previously taken or are you currently enrolled in any sport management classes?

- Yes
- No

Have you examined distributive justice within intercollegiate athletics (How resources are distributed within an athletic department) at any point in your sport management classes?

- Yes
- No

Your institution's athletic department is currently a member of what NCAA division?

- DI
- DII
- DIII

Your athletic department has received a large donation with the stipulation that the money be spent during the upcoming school year. The following nine options are available to you as the athletic director. Please rate each option based on your perception of the fairness of this option.

Very Unfair

Very Fair

A. The money would be distributed in accordance with the amount of revenue produced by each team. The team responsible for producing the most revenue during the past year would be given the largest share of the money.

B. The money would be distributed in accordance with your assessment of the amount of effort and work put forth by each team and its coach. The team that put forth the most effort and worked the hardest would receive the largest share of the money.

C. The money would be distributed in accordance with the spectator appeal of each team. The team drawing the most spectators would receive the largest share of the money.

D. The money would be distributed in accordance with the winning percentage of each team during the prior year. The team that had the best winning percentage would receive the largest share of the money.

E. The money would be distributed in accordance with the ability of each team and its coach. The team with the most ability would receive the largest share of the money.

F. The money would be distributed in accordance with your assessment of which team needs the money the most. The team with the greatest financial needs would receive the largest share of the money.

G. The money would be equally distributed among all the sports teams. Each team would receive an equal amount of the money.

H. The money would be distributed in inverse proportion to the amount of money each team has received in the past. The team that has received the least amount of money in the past would receive the largest share of the money.

I. The money would be distributed based on random selection. Each team would have an equal probability of selection.

If you were the athletic director in charge of distributing resources in the situation described above, which single option would you choose to implement?

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F
- G
- H
- I

Your athletic department has to cut a large amount of money from the budget for the upcoming year. The following nine options are available to you as the athletic director. Please rate each option based on your perception of the fairness of this option.

Very Unfair Very Fair

A. The money would be cut in accordance with the amount of revenue produced by each team. The team responsible for producing the most revenue during the past year would be cut the least.

B. The money would be cut in accordance with your assessment of the amount of effort and work put forth by each team and its coach. The team that put forth the most effort and worked the hardest would be cut the least.

C. The money would be cut in accordance with

the spectator appeal of each team. The team drawing the most spectators would be cut the least.

D. The money would be cut in accordance with the winning percentage of each team during the prior year. The team that had the best winning percentage would be cut the least.

E. The money would be cut in accordance with the ability of each team and its coach. The team with the most ability would be cut the least.

F. The money would be cut in accordance with your assessment of which team needs the money the most. The team with the greatest financial needs would be cut the least.

G. The money would be cut equally among all the sports teams. Each team would be cut an equal amount of the money.

H. The money would be cut in inverse proportion to the amount of money each team has received in the past. The team that has received the least amount of money in the past would be cut the least.

I. The money would be cut based on random selection. Each team would have an equal probability of selection.

If you were the athletic director in charge of distributing resources in the situation described above, which single option would you choose to implement?

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F
- G

- H
- I

Any additional comments:

That concludes the survey. Thank you very much for participating.

Appendix 2 – Human Subjects Approval

FORM A

Certification for Exemption from IRB Review for Research Involving Human Subjects

A. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(s) and/or CO-PI(s) (For student projects, list both the student and the advisor.):

Neil Bishop
Dr. Jim Bemiller - Advisor

B. DEPARTMENT:

Exercise, Sport and Leisure Studies

C. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER OF PI(s) and CO-PI(s):

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Knoxville, TN 37996
865-974-0359
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D. TITLE OF PROJECT:

Distributive Justice in NCAA Athletic Departments: Perceptions of Sport Management Students

E. EXTERNAL FUNDING AGENCY AND ID NUMBER (if applicable):

n/a

F. GRANT SUBMISSION DEADLINE (if applicable):

n/a

G. STARTING DATE (NO RESEARCH MAY BE INITIATED UNTIL CERTIFICATION IS GRANTED.):

Upon IRB Approval

H. ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE (Include all aspects of research and final write-up.):

May 31, 2009

I. RESEARCH PROJECT

- 1. Objective(s) of Project** (Use additional page, if needed.): The objective of this project is see what distribution and retribution methods current sport management students feel are the most fair in an intercollegiate athletic department setting.

Vita

Neil Robert Bishop was born on July, 20 1985, in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He is the son of Michael Bishop and Lori Barnes, and the brother of Brian Bishop. After graduating from Chancellor High School in 2003, he attended Emory and Henry College where he played varsity tennis for four years and received a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Sport Management in May of 2007. Neil came to the University of Tennessee in August of 2007 to pursue a master's degree in sport management and graduated in May of 2009.