

The Public vs. Private Debate: A Case Study of Indiana Interscholastic Sport and the Tournament Success Factor

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Abstract

Attempts at interscholastic competitive balance solutions (e.g., multipliers, separate playoffs, recruiting restrictions) have yielded mixed reactions for state athletic associations. Given the sparse amount of literature on this topic, as well as the national scope of this issue, this case study provides an empirical analysis of Indiana high school sport and the recently adopted Tournament Success Factor within the context of the public versus private debate. Results from all champions and runners-up in Indiana from 1997-98 to 2012-13 (N = 1,250) indicated private schools had a disproportionate amount of success, private school success differed among sport and class, and most success occurs from programs in metropolitan areas. Discussion on sport reclassification, as well as implications for competitive balance success formulas, is provided.

Introduction

Approximately 7.7 million students participate annually in high school sports (NFHS, 2013). State athletic associations are tasked with determining the most equitable manner in which high schools compete against one another, and how state champions are crowned. One of the most difficult components of this task is determining competitive balance. Inherent in the competitive balance discussions is the public school versus private school debate (Monahan, 2012).

The public versus private debate exists because public schools are restricted by designated geographical boundaries. Private schools, which may include religiously affiliated parochial schools, preparatory schools, independent vocational-technical schools, charter schools, and other schools operating outside of traditional geographical limits, do not have such restrictions (Cohen, 1997; Popke, 2012). Additionally, Epstein (2008) notes private schools are generally more affluent and are thought to have “better facilities, better coaching, greater access to facilities and staff out of season, greater parental involvement,” (p. 3) and ability to select students and maintain desired enrollment levels. These perceived advantages are thought to be the cause of disproportionate success seen by private schools in many states. For example, in the state of Alabama private schools win 25.5% of state championships despite having only 12% of private schools competing. In California 53% of all championships are won by 26% of private schools, including all five classes of boys and girls basketball (Popke, 2012). Ohio, where approximately 16% of high schools are private, has had as much as 70% of the state championships won by private schools in various sports (Monahan, 2012).

The disproportionate success of private schools has spurred a variety of competitive balance solutions meant to equipose perceived private school advantages. Some states have employed multipliers, which require private schools to multiply their enrollment by a designated number

(e.g., 1.5). This solution forces private schools to be classified in higher classes because of their recalculated enrollment (Epstein, 2008; Hall, 2005; Rogers & Warsinskey, 2006). Some states have separated public and private schools for post-season competition by creating separate playoffs (Christi, 2000; Coleman, 2012; Popke, 2012; Satterfield, 2005; Venci, 2009). Other states have increased their restrictions on athletic recruiting (Saul, 2012; Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association vs. Brentwood Academy, 2007), allowed multiple governing bodies for different sports (NYSPHSAA, 2013), or have created complex formulas for reclassification based on a variety of geographic or socioeconomic factors (Drago, 2011; Popke, 2012; Wright, 2012). The most contemporary attempt at competitive balance is a simplified formula known as a success factor. Connecticut and Indiana have employed versions of this solution.

Theoretical Foundations of Equity and Fairness

At the heart of the public versus private debate and competitive balance is an issue of *fairness*. Critics argue that the disproportionate number of championships by private high schools relative to their state representation is the result of a system that is fundamentally unfair (Popke, 2012). These accusations allow one to frame the debate in more philosophical terms. What is fair? If changes occur in the interest of fairness, would these changes cause more unfairness? The National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association encourages the concept of fairness in its code of ethics, as well as honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, and individual dignity (Blackburn, Forsyth, Olson, & Whitehead, 2013). These are positive concepts, but sometimes difficult to define.

It seems every state and everybody wants what is perceived as a *level playing field*, but no one seems to have an agreed-upon definition of a *level playing field* or the best way to get there. I think one of the major concerns is a reluctance to change and the fear of the unknown. (Brocato, 2013, para. 20)

If fairness is the goal of state associations, theories of justice can help shape how fairness is defined (Beauchamp, 1991). More specifically, the concept of distributive justice refers to the distribution of benefits whereby the qualities that people or groups possess are linked with the societal benefits or burdens they receive. Distributive justice has two distinguishing components. First, there is a comparative component to determine if the benefit or burden was levied in the same manner for individuals or groups. In high school sports, the way that public and private school stakeholders view the criteria to enter a state tournament can certainly be considered a comparative component. Second, there is a component of scarcity for the benefit (Bowie & Simon, 1977). Winning a state championship is certainly scarce.

Under the broad philosophical construct of distributive justice, there are theoretical perspectives that can be adopted. The egalitarian theory of justice suggests that equal treatment relative to the qualities of an individual or group is essential. So, those who are not equal should not be treated as such, while those that are should be. Those that have resources disproportionately less than others should be allowed greater benefits so the inequalities can be corrected (Raphael, 1981). This theory appears to favor supporters of public schools who point out that private schools are not restricted by geographical boundaries and often operate with greater financial resources. Based on egalitarian theory, a system to neutralize the unequal resources would be recommended.

Unlike egalitarian theory, the libertarian theory of distributive justice does not advocate for the disadvantaged to gain greater equality. Libertarian theory holds that "fair procedures, rules, and

regulations be in place in society to ensure that people have the freedom to make social and economic choices as they please" (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010, p. 100). Those individuals or groups that are more industrious and successful deserve to be rewarded more than those that contribute less. This theory advocates for minimal involvement by governing bodies and is largely capitalist in nature. Thus, stakeholders of private schools often take a libertarian stance by advocating for the right to attend those schools, and for the schools to have the same opportunity to compete for a state championship as public schools. If private schools win more, their hard work and success should be applauded as a result of their ability to generate resources that contributed to their success.

The utilitarian theory of distributive justice generally follows the concept that behaviors should be conducted to produce the greatest good for the greatest amount of people. The community or majority is emphasized over the individual, but only inasmuch that each individual has the right to be treated justly. This approach has a rational component of cost/benefit attached, which explains its use in many corporate or public policies. Attempting to eliminate feelings or intuitions, the utilitarian approach identifies concepts of justice, and then tries to apply them in a way that benefits the majority (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010; Frankena, 1973; Rachels, 1989). This theoretical approach could support both public and private interests. From the public school perspective, there are a great deal more public high schools in most states. Developing policy that levels the playing field for the large amount of public high school athletes would serve the greatest number of students. However, private high schools could argue the greatest good is to have an open competition whereby everyone competes in a similar manner ensuring that each student is treated justly. Determining what is just and what maximizes utility is the challenge of accepting the utilitarian point of view.

The IHSAA Tournament Success Factor

For decades, the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) has wrestled with the definition of *fairness* while considering the merit of many competitive balance solutions. Recently, in April of 2012, the IHSAA Board of Directors voted 17-0 to reject a proposal that would provide separate public and private state tournaments (IHSAA, 2012a). Ironically, however, in the same Board of Directors meeting, the newly introduced Tournament Success Factor (TSF) was tabled for further study so final details of the proposal could be discussed.

The TSF was developed slowly over several years and originally started as a *competition clause* whereby schools would move up in class if they won back-to-back state tournaments (Neddenriep, 2010). This idea was further modified by the Indiana Football Coaches Association to include a point system for tournament success over a four-year span. This modified point system was labeled a *tradition factor*. IHSAA commissioner, Bobby Cox, continued to amend the TSF into its current form that was approved on June 22, 2012 (IHSAA TSF, 2013).

In its current form, the TSF applies to IHSAA sponsored team sports (i.e., baseball, basketball, football, soccer, softball, and volleyball) and relies on the current classification structure determined by enrollment (i.e., 1A to 4A in most sports, 1A to 6A in football, 1A & 2A in soccer). Teams are reclassified at the conclusion of a designated reclassification period (currently two years) based on enrollment and tournament success points. Teams earn one point for a sectional championship, two points for a regional championship, three points for a semi-state championship, and four points for a state championship. If a team earns six or more points during the two-year reclassification period, they will move up one class (unless their enrollment already dictates they would move up in class). For example, if a 2A football team won a regional

championship one year, followed by a state championship the next year, that team would have earned six points and would compete in class 3A for the next two years. For teams that have moved up a class due to the TSF, they will remain in that class if they earn four or five points during the next two-year reclassification period. They will move up yet another class if they earn six or more points, and move back down a class if they earn three points or less (IHSAA TSF, 2013).

The rationale for accepting the TSF, while rejecting other options, appears to support theories of justice and fairness, as well as address many of the common issues raised during the public versus private debate. For example, the disproportionate amount of wins by private schools was addressed by Commissioner Cox. "Generally speaking in Indiana, in our team sports, while private schools make up about 14% of our membership, they are winning approximately 40% of the team state championships" (Monahan, 2012 p. 12). Additionally, "approximately 70 percent of private school students participate in extracurricular activities while approximately 30 percent of public school students choose to participate. That imbalance in and of itself creates a disparity" (p. 14). These issues became especially salient when private schools began to dominate football year after year prompting one journalist to write, "quite simply, I'm fed up with watching parochial schools dominate the state finals — and I'm fed up with the IHSAA's apparent indifference toward the problem" (Gaskins, 2012, para. 3). This frustration apparently echoed with the public as state football attendance has continually dropped year after year, prompting Commissioner Cox to state; "When you have the same matchups year after year after year, people don't come watch it" (Neddenriep, 2012, para. 6).

Because football largely influenced the creation of the TSF, Cox believes "that these changes significantly address competition issues in football and will prove to enhance the team sport experience across all other disciplines" (IHSAA, 2012b, para. 7). The ability to apply the TSF to all team sports, while focusing only on tournament success, appears to be its strength. In essence, the TSF addresses many of the public versus private issues without specifically discriminating against private schools in the form of separate tournaments or multipliers (Lazerus, 2011). The criterion is tournament success, and it applies to both public and private schools. Thus, by focusing only on tournament success, the multitude of factors used to rationalize disproportionate private school athletic success are inherently included in the evaluation process. Whether it is recruiting (formally or informally), socioeconomic factors, successful youth sport feeder programs, or parental support, the TSF accounts for them by evaluating the end result. "For years, coaches have been complaining about trying to level the playing field, and I think this is a nice step in that direction... I think it has good merits to it," (para. 10) indicated one Indiana high school athletic director (Lewis, 2012).

Criticisms

Although the Indiana TSF has been described as a *progressive* decision (IHSAA, 2012b), it has not come without acknowledgements of imperfection. During the initial stages of the TSF's creation Commissioner Cox noted, "The issue is not solvable... We're not going to get to nirvana; there's no way to get there. But we've been in class sports for 15 years now, and we've not changed from the day that we started" (Lazerus, 2011, para. 32). Cox also stated, "There's no silver bullet that is going to make every single game fair for every team... But (the committee has) taken a step to attempt to make things more fair" (Terlep, 2012, para. 8). In addition to this ever-present axiom that *you cannot make everyone happy*, the TSF appears to have three primary criticisms.

First, the TSF has been accused of *punishing* success. Critics argue successful athletic achievements should not result in a penalty that forces them to compete against schools with much larger enrollments. One coach stated, "We strongly disagree with the penalty – they can call it what they want, I call it a penalty. There's a lot of imbalance in that ruling" (Sokeland, 2012, para. 9). Commissioner Cox does not seem to share this sentiment. "People will say I'm punishing success. No, I'm not. I'm allowing success to have an opportunity for greatness, to get better, to step up their game to the next level" (Lazerus, 2011, para. 22). For many, this criticism seems to be a matter of perspective, and Cox points to a logical rationale for the most successful teams. "If they're that good to win two state championships, or advance to the state two times, maybe they should be playing somebody better than the smaller schools" (Sokeland, 2012, para. 24).

Second, and an extension of the first criticism, the TSF may apply to schools as a result of unusual success brought about by exceptional athletes. For example, if a team with historically low success happens to find itself with an unusually talented class of athletes, the program could conceivably go far in the state tournament for two consecutive years. However, the talent that caused the success is unsustainable due to graduation, and a regression to the mean is likely. As one football coach stated; "You have two strong years at most schools and you'll go into a rebuilding year at some point... Those schools will be going into a rebuilding year the same year they get bumped up to a higher class" (Terlep, 2012, para. 14). Another coach expressed the punitive nature of this scenario relative to the returning athletes.

We've won one state championship in 61 years of the school, in one sport, and that program will be smothered with this rule for the next two years. You're essentially telling the sophomores and juniors that their realistic chances of moving along in the post-season are wiped out. (Sokeland, 2012, para. 8)

Sokeland (2012) further explains how this scenario might cause an ethical dilemma for a coach; So if you are fortunate enough to win the sectional and play in the next round, do you go for the win, knowing your program would be, as Providence coach Dave Smith sees it, *penalized* for its success? Or would you *tank* the game, lose on purpose to avoid the reclassification. (para. 3)

This type of punitive scenario, however, may be limited to a few schools with some unusually gifted athletes. Commissioner Cox noted, "I've had just the opposite reaction, that they will enjoy the opportunity to play other schools they haven't played before because they're not in that class. And test their kids even further to see how good their team really is" (Sokeland, 2012, para. 24).

The final criticism is unique to the sport of soccer, which is the only team sport in Indiana with two classes. The remaining team sports have four classes, except football that has six. Thus, moving from 1A to 2A could mean schools with less than 500 students could be competing against schools with over 4,000 students. This scenario presents a potentially drastic increase in competition that the class system is meant to neutralize. When combined with the rebuilding scenario described above, soccer programs may feel the TSF is more punitive for them than sports that contain more classes (Sokeland, 2012).

Purpose

Given the longstanding issues in the public versus private debate, as well as the popularity of high school sports, it is surprising that little academic literature exists on these topics. Most of the information originates from state association press releases or hometown newspaper stories that discuss how attempts at competitive balance will impact their local teams. Within the small amount of academic literature found on the topic, there is a focus on the legal implications of competitive balance solutions. No source provides an empirical analysis of high school sport framed within the public versus private debate, or the most contemporary attempts at competitive balance (i.e., success factors). Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to provide an empirically-based analysis of Indiana high school sports and the TSF framed within the public versus private debate, as well as discuss the larger implications of the Indiana TSF relative to other states. This evaluation will provide scholars a reference point from which to conduct future research, while also providing a pragmatic source of information for relevant stakeholders.

Method

The presentation of this case follows the linear-analytic structure format with the goal of distinguishing between idiographic (case specific) and homothetic (general) knowledge. By nature, case studies typically include both quantitative and qualitative data in an effort to triangulate information and make meaning of the particular case (Andrew, Pedersen, & McEvoy, 2011). Evaluating Indiana sports and the TSF was accomplished primarily using quantitative data, but supported by the corresponding discussion that includes a variety of qualitative information (i.e., quotes) relative to the public/private debate and concept of *fairness*. Because this study is primarily exploratory, as well as the sparseness of the literature pertaining to the public versus private debate and success factors, no hypotheses were created. Ultimately, the study sought to answer the following research question: Is there a public versus private issue in the state of Indiana, and, if so, does the Indiana TSF address this issue?

Procedures

Historical data from all Indiana state high school athletic tournaments were collected to determine state champions ($n = 623$) and runners-up ($n = 627$ - *ties are included*) for the 16-year span between the 1997-98 and 2012-13 academic years. The starting academic year of 1997-98 was chosen because that is the first year Indiana used a multiple class system based on enrollment. Additionally, information regarding sport, class designation (e.g., 1A to 4A for class sports except football which goes to 6A and soccer which has only two classes), district (1-3 based on geographical location in the top, middle, and bottom part of the state; IHSAA Membership Map, 2013), location (rural or metropolitan), and public or private status was collected. Data regarding sport state champions, class, and district were mined from the IHSAA website (IHSAA, 2013) and IHSAA 2013-14 School Directory (2013). Each source is readily available on the IHSAA website with archival data organized by sport. Data for rural versus metropolitan was determined using a school's address. If the address fell within the *first class* of cities in Indiana (top 25 cities by population), they were considered metropolitan (US Census Bureau, 2010). Public and private determinations were taken from each school's website, or by calling the school directly for information.

Data Analysis

Data were divided by year, sport, and district. Descriptive data were analyzed using a combination of frequency counts and measures of central tendency. Specifically, cross-tabulations were used to demonstrate the interaction between the data points that included sport, class, public or private, district, and champions or runners-up. Secondly, a hierarchical loglinear analysis (HLA; Garson, 2012) was completed for four variables in the study (i.e., no class/class, rural/metropolitan, public/private, and champion/runner-up). A HLA allows for examination of multiple nominal variables simultaneously to establish interaction effects. A backward hierarchical method was used to determine which set of interactions composed a parsimonious model (Andrew et al., 2011). Finally, a brief descriptive examination of the TSF reclassifications from the first two-year cycle was provided.

Results

By Year

Table 1 demonstrates all Indiana state champions and runners-up for the years 1997-98 to 2012-13. The annual average for number of public champions was 26.13, while number of private champions was 12.81. Runners-up demonstrated a higher number of public schools with an average 31.94 compared to private schools at 7.25. Overall, there were 418 public champions compared to 205 private champions, and 511 public runners-up compared to 116 private runners-up. From year to year, the amount of public and private school champions and runners-up remained fairly consistent hovering around the average. However, in the most recent five years for champions, and the most recent three years for runners-up, the number of private schools exceeds the average for the sixteen years examined.

Table 1
Indiana State Champions and Runners-up for all Sports by Year: 1997-98 to 2012-13

Year	Champions			Runners-up		
	N	Public	Private	N	Public	Private
1997-98	38	28	10	39	35	4
1998-99	38	25	13	38	33	5
1999-00	38	25	13	38	33	5
2000-01	38	29	9	38	34	4
2001-02	38	27	11	38	34	4
2002-03	38	29	9	38	31	7
2003-04	39	27	12	39	29	10
2004-05	39	29	10	39	35	4
2005-06	39	26	13	41	36	5
2006-07	39	21	18	40	36	4
2007-08	39	27	12	39	30	9
2008-09	39	25	14	41	33	8
2009-10	39	23	16	39	32	7
2010-11	40	25	15	38	24	14
2011-12	41	25	16	41	26	15
2012-13	41	27	14	41	30	11
<i>Annual Avg.</i>		<i>26.13</i>	<i>12.81</i>		<i>31.94</i>	<i>7.25</i>

By Sport

Table 2 displays a cross-tabulation of single class sports, champions or runners-up, and public or private information. The single class sports include cross country, golf, gymnastics, soccer (added a second class in 2011), swimming, tennis, track, and wrestling. Several of these sports demonstrated strong public school success with boys and girls cross country, as well as boys and girls swimming, never having a private school as champion or runner-up. Moreover, the sports of golf and track had very few private schools as champions or runners-up. The sports of gymnastics, soccer, tennis, and wrestling had the most private school success, demonstrating a relatively high percentage of private schools winning either a championship or as runners-up compared to the number of private high schools competing. Although the TSF does not specifically apply to these sports due to their single class status, it is relevant to provide this information for contextualization purposes when discussing the team sports in Table 3.

Sport	N	Champions		N	Runners-up	
		Public	Private		Public	Private
C. Country (B)	16	16	0	16	16	0
C. Country (G)	16	16	0	16	16	0
Golf (B)	16	12	4	17	16	1
Golf (G)	16	15	1	17	15	2
Gymnastics	16	12	4	16	9	7
Soccer (B)	18	10	8	18	14	4
Soccer (G)	18	8	10	18	12	6
Swimming (B)	16	16	0	18	18	0
Swimming (G)	16	16	0	16	16	0
Tennis (B)	16	10	6	16	13	3
Tennis (G)	16	8	8	16	12	4
Track (B)	16	15	1	16	16	0
Track (G)	17	17	0	17	16	1
Wrestling	16	8	8	16	15	1
<i>Sport Avg.</i>		<i>12.79</i>	<i>3.57</i>		<i>14.57</i>	<i>2.07</i>

Table 3 provides a cross-tabulation of multiple class sports, champions or runners-up, and public or private information. Multiple class sports include baseball, basketball, football, softball, and volleyball (soccer was included in Table 2). These sports are subject to the TSF. Results indicated that for classes 1A, 2A, and 3A, there were a disproportionately high amount of private schools in the state championship contest relative to the amount of private schools competing throughout the state. For classes 1A and 2A, over one third of the teams in the state championship game were private, with the sports of girls basketball, football, and volleyball demonstrating the highest private school success. At the 3A level, private schools demonstrated the most success, especially in the previously mentioned sports of girls basketball, football, and volleyball. In fact, for football and volleyball, private schools were involved in the state championship game 65% and 59% of the time, respectively. For class 4A, only the sport of football had significant impact from private schools, with 10 of 16 state champions hailing from private schools.

Table 3
Multiple class State Champions and Runners-up by Team Sport from 1997-98 to 2012-13

Sport	1A		2A		3A		4A	
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
Baseball	19	13	24	8	21	11	26	6
Champions	5	11	11	5	11	5	15	1
Runners-up	14	2	13	3	10	6	11	5
Basketball (B)	24	8	24	8	23	9	31	1
Champions	11	5	11	5	11	5	16	0
Runners-up	13	3	13	3	12	4	15	1
Basketball (G)	20	12	19	13	17	15	32	0
Champions	9	7	6	10	6	10	16	0
Runners-up	11	5	13	3	11	5	16	0
Football	21	11	17	15	11	21	18	14
Champions	9	7	6	10	3	13	6	10
Runners-up	12	4	11	5	8	8	12	4
Softball	23	9	24	8	26	6	20	0
Champions	12	4	10	6	12	4	10	0
Runners-up	11	5	14	2	14	2	10	0
Volleyball	18	14	17	15	13	19	26	6
Champions	6	10	2	14	7	9	12	4
Runners-up	12	4	15	1	6	10	14	2
<i>Sport Avg.</i>	<i>20.83</i>	<i>11.17</i>	<i>20.83</i>	<i>11.17</i>	<i>18.5</i>	<i>13.5</i>	<i>25.5</i>	<i>3</i>

By District

Table 4 displays district as another layer of analysis cross-tabulated with year, champion/runner-up, and public/private. Most noteworthy is the large amount of champions and runners-up that come from District 2 (i.e., the middle third of the state from north to south). For example, the average annual number of District 2 champions from public high schools is 14.44, while the average number of champions from private high schools is 7.13. These numbers are more than double the amount of public and private champions from District 1 and District 3.

Table 4
Champions and Runners-up by Year, District, and Public/Private Designations from 1997-98 to 2012-13

Year	Champions						Runners-up					
	District 1		District 2		District 3		District 1		District 2		District 3	
	Pub	Pvt	Pub	Pvt	Pub	Pvt	Pub	Pvt	Pub	Pvt	Pub	Pvt
1997-98	8	2	13	7	7	1	8	2	13	0	14	2
1998-99	5	4	14	7	6	2	12	2	11	2	10	1
1999-00	9	3	11	9	5	1	9	4	14	0	10	1
2000-01	11	3	11	4	7	2	8	1	21	2	5	1
2001-02	6	5	16	3	5	3	7	3	12	0	15	1
2002-03	5	2	19	6	5	1	11	7	11	0	9	0
2003-04	8	2	16	9	3	1	11	8	12	1	6	1
2004-05	6	6	18	4	5	0	11	0	15	2	9	2
2005-06	6	5	11	7	9	1	13	1	13	3	10	1
2006-07	6	3	13	14	2	1	11	2	14	1	11	1
2007-08	7	5	16	6	4	1	11	4	14	4	5	1
2008-09	5	4	13	8	7	2	11	3	15	2	7	3
2009-10	5	8	12	8	6	0	10	1	10	4	12	2
2010-11	5	3	13	10	7	2	6	8	12	5	6	1
2011-12	4	7	18	6	3	3	7	4	11	7	8	4
2012-13	5	6	17	6	5	2	9	2	15	5	6	4
<i>Average</i>	<i>6.31</i>	<i>4.25</i>	<i>14.44</i>	<i>7.13</i>	<i>5.38</i>	<i>1.44</i>	<i>9.69</i>	<i>3.25</i>	<i>13.31</i>	<i>2.38</i>	<i>8.94</i>	<i>1.63</i>

Table 5 includes district information cross-tabulated with public/private and champion/runner-up information. However, in place of years, individual sports are displayed. Again, the most noteworthy result is the large amount of champions and runners-up from District 2. In fact, the number of champions from District 2 is far more than the number of champions from District 1 and District 3 combined. From an individual sport perspective, only a few sports demonstrate

more private school success than found for public schools. For example, football in District 2 has 30 private schools with state championships compared to 23 public schools with state championships. District 2 also produced 28 championships for private high schools in volleyball compared to 22 championships for public schools. Girls basketball in District 1 has 14 private high school state championships compared to eight championships for public high schools.

Table 5
Champions and Runners-up by Sport, District, and Public/Private Designations from 1997-98 to 2012-13

Sport	Champions						Runners-up					
	District 1		District 2		District 3		District 1		District 2		District 3	
	Pub	Pvt	Pub	Pvt	Pub	Pvt	Pub	Pvt	Pub	Pvt	Pub	Pvt
Baseball	14	8	16	12	12	2	10	4	19	6	19	6
Basketball (B)	10	4	23	10	16	1	17	6	20	4	16	1
Basketball (G)	8	14	19	9	10	4	21	4	12	4	18	5
C. Country (B)	4	0	6	0	6	0	8	0	7	0	1	0
C. Country (G)	5	0	10	0	1	0	8	0	6	0	2	0
Football	11	9	23	30	6	1	23	10	26	7	10	4
Golf (B)	1	1	7	3	4	0	0	0	9	1	7	0
Golf (G)	3	0	6	1	6	0	1	2	12	0	2	0
Gymnastics	11	4	1	0	0	0	5	5	2	2	2	0
Soccer (B)	4	6	4	0	2	2	5	1	6	2	3	1
Soccer (G)	0	5	8	2	0	3	6	4	3	0	3	2
Softball	13	6	19	7	12	1	8	4	18	4	23	1
Swimming (B)	3	0	10	0	3	0	8	0	8	0	2	0
Swimming (G)	0	0	16	0	0	0	2	0	11	0	3	0
Tennis (B)	0	0	7	6	3	0	4	2	5	1	4	0
Tennis (G)	0	1	7	6	1	1	5	0	1	1	6	3
Track (B)	1	1	13	0	1	0	4	0	12	0	0	0
Track (G)	8	0	9	0	0	0	4	1	12	0	0	0
Volleyball	2	9	22	28	3	0	10	9	15	6	22	2
Wrestling	3	0	5	0	0	8	6	0	9	0	0	1
Totals	101	68	231	114	86	23	155	52	213	38	143	26

Hierarchical Loglinear Analysis (HLA)

To determine if the descriptive results offered statistically significant interactions between the variables, a HLA was conducted. The best loglinear model for explaining the observed frequency distributions contained five significant two-way interaction effects among the four variables investigated. First, the interaction between no class/class and public/private indicated that class sports had significantly more private school champions and runners-up ($n = 252$) than was expected ($n = 206.5$), $LR\chi^2(1, N = 1250) = 40.06, p < .001$. Second, the interaction between no class/class and rural/metropolitan indicated that class sports had significantly more rural champions and runners-up ($n = 412$) than was expected ($n = 328.7$), $LR\chi^2(1, N = 1250) = 104.75, p < .001$. Third, the interaction between rural/metropolitan and public/private indicated there were significantly more private champions and runners-up from metropolitan areas ($n = 274$) than was expected ($n = 189.8$), $LR\chi^2(1, N = 1250) = 135.82, p < .001$. Fourth, the interaction between rural/metropolitan and champion/runner-up indicated there were significantly more champions from metropolitan areas ($n = 406$) than expected ($n = 368.3$), $LR\chi^2(1, N = 1250) = 18.86, p < .001$. Finally, the interaction between public/private and champion/runner-up indicated there were significantly more champions from private schools ($n = 205$) than was expected ($n = 160$), $LR\chi^2(1, N = 1250) = 34.32, p < .001$.

Tournament Success Factor Results

As part of the assessment, it was prudent to document the number of public and private schools that were required to move up in class due to the first round of reclassifications from TSF totals.

Table 6 displays the cross tabulations between sport, class, district, and public or private designation. A total of 17 programs earned the required 6+ points to move up a class beginning in the 2013-14 academic year. Six public high schools and 11 private high schools were reclassified. There were five programs moving from A to 2A, six programs moving from 2A to 3A, five programs moving from 3A to 4A, and one program moving from 4A to 5A. From the district perspective, there were five programs reclassified from District 1, 11 programs reclassified from District 2, and one program reclassified from District 3. Football had the most reclassifications of any sport with five, all of which were private high schools.

Table 6
Number of Programs Reclassified by Sport, Class, District, and Public or Private

Sport	Class				District		
	A	2A	3A	4A	1	2	3
Baseball							
Public	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Private	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Basketball (B)							
Public	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Basketball (G)							
Public	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Private	1	1	0	0	1	0	1
Football							
Public	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	2	1	1	1	1	4	0
Softball							
Public	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Private	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Volleyball							
Public	0	1	1	0	0	2	0
Private	0	0	1	0	0	1	0

Discussion

Although this study attempted to evaluate the Indiana TSF in terms of its ability to address the public versus private issue, it should be noted the TSF was not specifically designed for that purpose. Even though the origins of the TSF, created by initiatives from the Indiana Football Coaches Association, appeared to somewhat address the public versus private issue (Neddenriep, 2010), the TSF was modified over time to address a larger concept of success and fairness, no matter if the school was public or private. According to Kelly (2012), IHSAA Commissioner Cox stated this notion in the following way:

While private and parochial schools have certain advantages, public schools also possess advantages, as well. All these varied advantages are now being addressed by implementing a success factor. At the end of the day, some people are only concerned with what schools are winning IHSAA state championships and those people want to feel as if their school has a fair opportunity to be successful. Thus, we are addressing success. (para. 22)

With this disclaimer acknowledged, the results of this exploratory case study examined the TSF through the theoretical lens of fairness and distributive justice, while contextualizing the TSF within the public versus private debate.

Evaluations of the TSF for Indiana

During the past sixteen years some important patterns emerged relative to the public versus private debate in Indiana. Making meaning of these findings is critical to understanding the implications of the TSF for Indiana, and for state associations across the country that might consider similar legislation.

Overview

The average amount of championships won by public high schools each year was more than twice that of private high schools, 26.13 to 12.81 respectively. Similarly, the total number of championships won by public schools ($n = 418$) is twice that of championships won by private high schools ($n = 205$). Thus, private schools win championships 32.9% of the time in all sports. Relative to the amount of private schools participating in the state (approximately 14% for all sports), a disproportionately high amount of private schools win championships. In other words, 14% of the schools in the state (i.e., private schools) have won 32.9% of the state titles. This trend indicates that private schools win championships at a rate more than twice their representation. Therefore, from a generalized perspective, there is evidence to suggest private schools have won championships at a rate disproportionately higher than public schools relative to number of private high schools in the state. The significant interaction effect from the loglinear analysis between public/private and champion/runner-up confirms this finding.

When expanding these findings to include champions *and* runners-up (i.e., all teams that finished first or second in the state tournament), there is less disproportionality. The annual average amount of public schools that finished first or second was 29.03, compared to 10.03 for private schools. The total number of public schools to finish first or second was 929 (74.32%), while the total number of private schools to finish first or second was 321 (25.7%). Thus, the average annual percentage of private school champions relative to all champions and runners-up (12.81%) was 2.78 percentage points higher than the average annual percentage for both private school champions *and* runners-up combined (10.03%), and 5.56 percentage points higher than the average annual percentage represented by private schools who were only runners-up (7.25%). This trend indicates when private schools were in the championship contest they tended to win more often, and win at a disproportionately higher level relative to their public school counterparts. It is important to note, however, that even though the 25.7% of private schools that were champions *and* runners-up is less than the 32.9% of private schools that were only champions, this number is still over 10% higher than the 14% of private schools represented in the state. These findings support the notion that Indiana has had a disproportionately high amount of private schools with success in the post-season tournament. Subsequently, 11 of the 17 schools subject to moving up a class due to the TSF were private schools. That is, 64.7% of the schools required to reclassify due to tournament success were private, which is well over the 14% of private schools represented in the state. Furthermore, all five of the reclassifications in the sport of football were private schools.

By Year

With the addition of a fourth class for softball in 2003-04, and a second class in boys and girls soccer in 2011-12, the number of total champions and runners-up has grown from 38 in 1997-98 to 41 in 2012-13. There are some noticeable trends during this time. For example, from 1997-98 to 2004-05, the first eight years of class sport in Indiana, a total of 87 private schools won state championships while 43 private schools were runners-up. During the most recent

eight years, 2005-06 to 2012-13, a total of 118 private schools won state championships while 73 private schools were runners-up. The numbers for public school champions (219 down to 199) and runners-up (264 down to 247) demonstrated a decline in public school success during the most recent eight-year period. The increase in success for private schools, in addition to the declining success for public schools, clearly indicates a trend favoring private schools.

Determining the cause for increased private school success in the state of Indiana is beyond the scope of this study. As previously alluded to, however, success for private schools is likely a combination of factors. Resource allocation, strong academic reputations, non-boundaried districts, selective admission standards, location, and tradition are probable to play a role (Epstein, 2008). There might also be some credibility to the notion that *success breeds success*. Successful private schools may attract more students as they garner more success each year, thus building on prior accomplishments. Additionally, students and parents may view private schools as a place where they can get the best experience both academically and athletically. Future research could focus on resource allocation and the perceptions of parents, students, and other stakeholders regarding the causes for increased annual private school athletic success.

By Sport

Although there appears to be a disproportionately increasing trend in private school success overall, closer examination reveals such success is not distributed evenly across sports. For single class sports not subject to the TSF, there is vastly more public school success. This result is expected given that 86% of schools in Indiana are public. In fact, there are only the single-class sports of gymnastics, tennis, and wrestling which have had a noteworthy amount of private school success. Cross country and swimming have never had a champion or runner-up from a private school. Multiple class sports are where private schools find the most success. This result is expected given the amount of schools in each class is capped, and that private schools tend to fall in the three lowest classes due to selective enrollments. These findings were statistically supported by the loglinear analysis, which found that class sports had more private school champions and runners-up than expected, while single class sports had more public champions and runners-up than expected.

Because team sports tend to be the most popular, there is considerable attention given to programs that are most successful, especially if they are private schools. This attention tends to be focused on a few private schools in specific sports that have traditionally had a stranglehold on success. For example, in the 16 years since class sports were enacted, Indianapolis Bishop Chatard has won the 3A state football championship 10 times, including the three most recent championships. They have also been runner-up once. In volleyball, Muncie Burriss won the 2A state title 14 consecutive years from 1997-98 to 2010-11. Lafayette Central Catholic has won the five most recent class A baseball championships, and seven of the last nine baseball championships. They have also won the four most recent class A football championships. These three private schools demonstrate a pattern of success unparalleled from any public school in classes A, 2A, or 3A, and serve as examples which exacerbate the public versus private debate in the state of Indiana. It is not until the size of the school reaches a considerable level (4A and beyond) that public schools find a consistent pattern of success in class sports, which is likely why non-class sport championships are usually won by public schools. For example, Carmel, a large 5A public school, has won the girls swimming state championship every year since 1986-87, as well as state championships in a variety of other sports.

From a sport perspective, it appears the high enrollment numbers of large public schools may serve to neutralize some advantages smaller private schools may enjoy. The sheer number of students from which to field a team allows the largest public schools to choose from a talent pool much deeper than found in smaller public schools. Relative to the public and private debate, dominance by private schools in class sports, particularly in the lower classes, demonstrate where the disproportionate amount of success is occurring. This result is particularly important for the TSF because it suggests the schools most likely to be influenced, and sustain competition in a higher class, would be private schools from classes A, 2A, and 3A. This notion was generally supported in the first round of TSF reclassifications where 10 of 16 teams (62.5%) reclassified in A-3A were from private schools. In the sport of football, this notion was especially true where all five of the reclassifications were private high schools. When compared to the percentage of private schools competing in the state (14%), the reclassification numbers appear to impact private schools at a disproportionately greater level than public schools due to their tournament success. Therefore, the TSF is not necessarily designed to address the public and private issue relative to an individual sport, but does so nevertheless. These findings, and the TSF in general, appear to support the egalitarian theory of distributive justice by creating a system that counterbalances the causes of inequality, whatever those causes may be. Future research could attempt to isolate the causes of the inequality by examining in more detail the factors that create athletic success for smaller private schools. For example, examining differences in sports, resources, admission procedures, tradition, recruiting, coaching trends, or talent levels could provide more insight relative to specific programs.

By District and Rural/Metropolitan

Although year and sport are the most obvious way to analyze the TSF relative to the public and private debate, it is sensible to also examine the geographical trends to determine if different areas of the state have differing levels of success. Results clearly indicated a geographical trend favoring District 2, which is the middle portion of the state that contains 10 of the top 25 most populated cities in Indiana, including Indianapolis (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010; IHSAA Membership Map, 2013). Although it has the most full-member schools at 154, compared to District 1 with 130 and District 3 with 128 (IHSAA 2013-14 School Directory, 2013), District 2 clearly wins championships at a disproportionately higher rate than the other districts. In fact, District 2 is home to 37.4% of the schools in Indiana, but has won 55.4% of the state championships. In football, District 2 has won 66.3% of the championships.

These numbers clearly demonstrate the success District 2 has in athletic competitions. The likely explanation for this success is the difference in population density between Districts. Indianapolis and its surrounding municipalities account for well over 1.7 million people (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010). Ft. Wayne, the next largest city and member of District 1, accounts for only 254,555 people. By comparison, the numbers steadily decline with the tenth largest city of Muncie at 70,087, and the 25th largest city of Merrillville at 35,631 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010). It is within these larger cities where more private schools and larger public schools are found, and it is these private schools and large public high schools surrounding Indianapolis that are winning championships at the highest rate. Similarly, champions from Ft. Wayne, Evansville, and South Bend are more plentiful than for schools found in the rural areas surrounding these cities. These conclusions are supported by the loglinear analysis utilized in this study which found that 274 champions or runners-up came from metropolitan areas, but only 189.8 were expected. Therefore, it appears the combination of increased population and demand for private schools, in addition to the resources that accompany them, allows metropolitan areas to have

some distinct advantages. One administrator from the Missouri State High School Activities Association acknowledged this advantage in his state by noting;

If we look at all schools – public and non-public – that have success in all sports, it is my belief the opportunities presented to the students because of location (metropolitan area) and financial resources available have a significant impact on athletic success. There is nothing that schools can do to change those opportunities for all students in the state.
(Monaghan, 2012, p. 14)

The concept that more people equals more championships is logical, especially for sports with one class where large metropolitan public talent pools and increased resources serve to neutralize resources at smaller schools. However, the purpose of class sports is to create competitive balance by having schools with similar enrollments compete against each other. By this logic, schools should be nearly equal in their ability to compete and have success relative to the percentage of public and private or rural and metropolitan success in each class. This logic was confirmed by the loglinear analysis which found that class sports had significantly more rural champions and runners-up than single class sports. From a proportionality standpoint, this finding makes sense because there are many more public schools in each class than private.

By Reclassification

The evidence from the past 16 years clearly demonstrates a statistically disproportionate amount of success from private schools, schools from District 2, and schools from metropolitan areas. From a distributive justice standpoint, the TSF reclassification structure was designed to eliminate the advantages seen by successful programs and counterbalance those advantages by moving the most successful programs to a higher class. In the case of Indiana, this was accomplished in a few different ways. First, 1A-3A private schools in the sport of football and basketball were reclassified. These schools represent examples most commonly referenced in the public versus private debate where the same private programs continue to dominate the post-season tournament year after year. These programs and sports are also the most popular, and thus fuel the public versus private debate. The second way, which is outside of the realm of the public private debate, involves public schools that overcame the odds to be a champion or runner-up in their sport. This outcome was seen most often in baseball, softball, and volleyball. For these public school programs, sustained success may not be the norm. Thus, these programs may have a legitimate case that the TSF is a punitive tool used when programs have high, but short-lived amount of success.

Implications Beyond Indiana

The current research supports the Indiana TSF as a competitive balance solution which has the potential to impact how other state associations address competitive balance issues. As indicated by the results, Indiana has a disproportionate amount of private schools with post-season tournament success. Most of the disproportionate success comes from many of the same private schools in the largest metropolitan areas. This scenario is not unique to Indiana. Many states have a disproportionately large amount of private schools winning state championships, and many are from metropolitan areas. Furthermore, many of the same schools continue to have repeated success. A success factor appears to address these issues. This is why states such as Arizona, Louisiana, and Illinois are considering adoption of similar legislation. According to a letter directed to high school principals, the Louisiana High School Athletic Association Executive Director wrote that a success factor "seems to be the simplest

and easiest formula that is being used by other states at this time. If we choose to go with this idea, this formula has real merit" (Brocato, 2013, para. 17). By providing a detailed analysis of Indiana, other state associations can make comparisons and determine the appropriateness of similar legislation to their state.

Accepting the use of a success factor, however, is not an easy decision for state athletic associations. Although this study confirmed that the Indiana TSF is a relatively effective means by which to address the public versus private issue, every state is different. B. Elliot Hopkins, director of sports and educational services for the National Federation of State High School Associations framed this idea as follows:

I think each state association really has to do some soul-searching... What administrators do in one state may have no place in another state. There's no right or wrong; it's just what works best in that state at a particular time. You have to add that clarifier: 'at a particular time. (Popke, 2012, para. 10)

This assertion is certainly true when considering states like Wyoming where only one private high school exists, or states like Delaware and Hawaii where private schools make up approximately 50% of all schools (Popke, 2012). Additionally, state associations should recognize that, although success factors may protect them from legal retaliation associated with treating private schools differently (e.g., multipliers or separate playoffs), all schools forced to reclassify may view such a rule as a punishment for success. Therefore, there may not be backlash exclusively from private schools when implementing success factors, but there could be some form of rebellion from any given school that feels they have been unjustly punished for their success.

Limitations

There are three limitations identified in this case study. First, the discussion regarding the public versus private debate cannot capture all of the elements unique to each state. There are certainly some states that have distinctive scenarios regarding post-season play, public/private issues, or legislative barriers that are in constant flux. Second, the operational definition of metropolitan was set by the researcher to include the top 25 cities by population. Adjusting this definition to include more or less metropolitan areas would likely yield different results relative to rural/metropolitan variable used in this study. Third, the case study of Indiana sports, while comprehensive, may not resemble some states. Therefore, the pragmatic use of this case may be limited to states with similar characteristics as Indiana.

Suggestions for Future Research

To further triangulate the data, qualitative studies should be conducted to assess the perceptions of parents, students, and other stakeholders at a variety of different schools. Comparing these perceptions between public and private schools, as well as rural and urban, may provide additional insight to the relative success or failures of different athletic programs. Additional analysis assessing specific sports, resources, admission procedures, tradition, recruiting, coaching trends, or talent levels could yield more insight into the public versus private debate. Furthermore, examination of other states beyond Indiana would allow stakeholders to draw comparisons and make more informed legislative decisions. Finally, the longitudinal impact of the Indiana TSF should be examined. Determining if the trend to reclassify continues to impact mostly private schools, and if reclassified programs are successful enough to remain in higher classes, could shed important light on the long-term effectiveness of the TSF.

Conclusion

Given the incessant nature of the public versus private debate within interscholastic sport, it is surprising that little academic literature exists on the topic. Piecing together information from the few academic sources that exist, as well as from popular media, suggests this topic is vastly understudied. At the heart of this debate is the disproportionate amount of private school success in post-season state high school tournaments. State high school associations have struggled with this topic for decades and have implemented a variety of potential solutions that include multipliers, separate playoffs, recruiting restrictions, and complex socioeconomic reclassification formulas. The success factor is the most contemporary attempt at competitive balance, and has been implemented in Indiana.

The primary purpose of this case study was to provide a thorough review of Indiana high school champions and runners-up for the past 16 years. This allowed the researchers to detail the nature of high school sports in one state, and relate the findings to the larger public versus private debate. In turn, this permitted the researchers to assess a current attempt at competitive balance (i.e., success factor) relative to a variety of variables (e.g., public/private, rural/metropolitan, class/no class, champion/runner up). The most noteworthy results from Indiana clearly demonstrated that private schools have won a disproportionate amount of championships (32.4%) relative to the amount of private schools in the state (14%); private schools have been more successful in recent years and tend to have the most success in the lowest three classes; the sports of football, girls basketball, and volleyball demonstrated the most private school success; and geography plays a significant role in success with most champions or runners-up coming from the central (District 2) and metropolitan areas of the state. Many of these findings seem to have been corroborated in the first round of TSF reclassifications where 11 of 17 reclassified schools (64.7%) were private.

Although the Indiana TSF was not specifically designed to address the public versus private debate, it appears to do so indirectly. The fact that 64.7% of reclassified programs were private when only 14% of the schools in the state are private is powerful. An equally powerful truth is that five of the 17 reclassified programs were from football, all of which were private schools from metropolitan areas. Caution should be exercised, however, in assuming that a success factor could put an end to the public versus private debate. There are certainly discussions to be had regarding the appropriate level of success points needed to determine reclassification and what to do if private schools move up in class yet continue to be disproportionately successful. Additionally, state associations considering success factors should be aware that even if many of the traditionally successful private schools are moved up in class, there is the potential for all reclassified programs (public and private) to feel punished for success, or be forced to compete at a higher class during a *rebuilding* phase. Pragmatically, state associations can use the results of this case study to determine how much their state might have in common with Indiana, and if a success factor could be a solution to mitigate their concerns.

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