

A COMPARISON OF THE LOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACTS
ON THE CITIZENS OF HOUSTON AND DALLAS IN
REGARDS TO THEIR NFL TEAMS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study applies Aristotle's theories of logos and pathos to the connections citizens have with the sports team in their city. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were used to determine the differences between the logical and emotional impact the Dallas Cowboys and the Houston Texans have on their fans and the cities they are a part of. This study effectively demonstrated the strong emotional connections between study participants and the sports teams in their cities, as well as confirmed the idea of pathos as possibly having a stronger connection on sports fan than the idea of logos. Overall, this study concludes that Cowboys' fans are more loyal than Texans' fans due to long-standing tradition and community support; however, strong team loyalty is not necessarily linked to financial support of a team.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Professional sports have become an integral part of society in the United States. Professional team sports generate \$10 billion in revenues each year (Fort, 2003). Forty-five cities in the U.S. have at least one team in the four major sporting leagues: National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), National Hockey League (NHL), and Major League Baseball (MLB) (information obtained from each league's Web site). Eleven of these cities have a team in all four of these leagues, and Los Angeles and New York have multiple teams in these leagues. This is not including the hundreds of cities that have some form of minor league team or the hundreds of universities with competitive sporting events. Research regarding the economics of a sports team is fairly recent; however, due to the ever increasing number of sports teams, research on this topic is increasing in prominence. My study will contribute to this research area by expanding on research that has just begun focusing on the intangible benefits of a sports team and combining it with research on the economics of a sports team. Hopefully, my research will help to pave the groundwork for future research in these two areas.

Research Importance

This research is important because this is the age where sports teams and sports figures are larger than life; cities tend to give into any demand made by a sports teams,

especially if what the team proposes appears to have a positive impact on the surrounding community. Economic impact studies are generally conducted to show cities the benefits possible with the addition of a sports team or stadium. These economic studies can have a large impact on these cities. The more the average citizen can learn about the true impacts of the team on the city, the more educated they will be when it comes time to vote on building new stadiums or bringing in a new sports team. While economics and job growth are what people tend to base success on when bringing in a sports team, the intangible benefits that a community receives from a sports team may be equal to or, at times, outweigh these economic benefits.

I am interested in comparing perspectives from citizens in two different cities to see if there is a difference in support for their NFL teams. The cities I am concentrating on are Dallas, TX and Houston, TX. Dallas is the second largest city in Texas and eighth in the nation with a population of 1.1 million according to the 2000 census (Dallas, TX, 2005). Houston is the largest city in Texas and the fourth largest in the nation with a population of 1.9 million (Houston, TX, 2005).

Dallas Cowboys

Dallas is the home to the NFL franchise, the Dallas Cowboys, who became the 13th franchise to be created in the National Football League. The team received approval from the league in 1960. The Cowboys held their first season in 1960 and established themselves as one of the NFL dynasty teams in 1966, when they began a NFL-record winning streak of 20 consecutive seasons (Dallas Cowboys, 2005). Since this time they

have had 28 winning seasons, 27 playoff appearances, 19 Division Championships, 8 Super Bowl appearances, and 5 Super Bowl wins (Dallas Cowboys, 2005).

The team started playing in the Cotton Bowl stadium and moved to Texas Stadium in Irving, TX in 1971. Recently, the city of Arlington approved the construction of a new \$650 million stadium. Further, the Cowboys have become the most successful franchise in NFL history, and the team is commonly coined “America’s Team” (Dallas Cowboys, 2005). Their annual game on Thanksgiving Day has given the team national exposure and has helped them out-sell all other NFL franchises in terms of souvenirs and apparel sales. All sports fans seem to have an opinion about the Dallas Cowboys – either they love them or hate them.

Houston Texans

The Houston Oilers were Houston’s NFL team from 1960-1996. When the team left at the end of the 1996 season, Houston’s quest for another NFL team began. The desired outcome finally occurred on October 6, 1999 when the city was granted a franchise for \$700 million for the Houston Texans(Houston Texans, 2005). The Houston Texans’ first season was in 2002. Their first victory came in their first ever game against the Dallas Cowboys where they defeated them 19-10. Since that opening game, the Houston Texans have had four straight losing seasons; however, every home game has been a sell-out (Houston Texans, 2005).

The NFL teams in these cities are appealing to research because they are both located in the same state and are located in cities that are relatively close to the same size,

and yet each of these teams has been established for different amounts of time in each city. The difference in these two teams is apparent. One is established and rich in tradition (Cowboys), while the other is still in the beginning stages of fan development (Texans). It is worth studying the comparison between the opinions of the residents of the two cities to see if their opinions differ concerning their football teams and the benefits received from them.

I researched this topic by conducting a focus group in both cities (Dallas and Houston). After the focus groups, I conducted follow-up interviews with participants from these focus groups. Through these research methods, I hope to gain a more complete understanding of citizens' emotional connections to their sports teams, as well as to identify their perceptions of the economic and intangible benefits received from the two teams.

This topic is fascinating to me because of my interest in sports and fans' emotional connection with sports teams. These two cities and the teams that reside in them are appealing since I live in Texas. The Cowboys and Texans are well-known throughout the state, and I am interested in finding out what makes them so popular with their fans, as well as to identify any differences there may be in fan loyalty between the two cities and their teams.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following research examines the overall impact of a sports team on the community in which they reside. Past research can be classified into two different areas: economic impact and intangible benefits. The economic impact topic covers economic growth and job growth, while the intangible impact topic covers community reputation and community self-esteem.

Economic Impact

Economic impact of sports is defined as the net economic change in the incomes of residents resulting from spending related to a sports event or facility (Howard & Crompton, 1995). Economic impact is usually measured through four different avenues. First, the building of the facility creates new jobs for local residents. Second, residents who attend the new sporting event generate new spending in the community which enhances local employment. Third, tourists from outside the city are attracted to the sporting event and the money they spend increases local revenue. Finally, this new spending causes a multiplier effect, as increased local income creates more resident and community spending and more local jobs (Howard & Crompton, 1995).

Economic impact is assessed through economic impact studies conducted by research firms. These firms are hired by advocates of a project to examine the potential amount of revenue earnings made possible through the creation of a new sporting team, event, or facility. Economic impact is the most common reason given as justification for a

new sporting event; however, numbers are consistently exaggerated by a factor of 10-15 times the actual amount of the economic impact (Howard & Crompton, 1995).

The research below examines studies and newspaper articles that have been written regarding the economic impact of sports teams on their communities. These research studies show that economic impact studies tend to be overly optimistic in regards to the monetary benefits they claim, while the newspaper articles on this issue tend to show both sides of the economic impact debate.

Economic Impact Studies and Reports

One of the first studies to look into economic impact was Robert Baade's 1996 study where he hoped to demonstrate that professional sports teams significantly increase income and job opportunities enough to justify spending public money to build new stadiums for local teams. Each city with a sports team in the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), National Basketball Association (NBA), or National Hockey League (NHL) was studied (which equaled 35 cities in 1996). Thirteen control cities that did not have a sports team currently in place were also analyzed. An empirical equation was set up to test the growth of metropolitan income and increase in jobs for each of these 48 cities for the past 30-year period. In the end, the results were shown to be statistically insignificant for an increase in city income with the presence of a sports team, and there was no positive correlation between an increase in the number of jobs in the city and the presence of a sports team in the city (Baade, 1996).

These two findings showed the exact opposite of what Baade had originally assumed and supported the argument that sports teams may not have as much of an impact on the city they reside in as originally assumed. Baade concluded that sports teams are oversold as a catalyst to increase the economic growth of a city. Therefore, the importance of this study is in the final conclusion. Are teams promoting themselves as a positive impact to a city economically when they may instead be a financial problem for the cities? (Baade, 1996). Baade's study spurred numerous scholars to begin asking themselves the same question and, as such, encouraged other studies that tried to prove positive economic results.

Three years later, Coates and Humphreys (1999) conducted one of the first studies concerning economic impacts and stadium building. They based their study on the relationship between sports teams, per capita personal income, and actual per capita income. Information from 37 U.S. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas was used during the time period from 1969-1994. Coates and Humphreys expanded the research equation from Robert Baade's 1996 study to conduct their research. They argued the original equation did not contain the right questions and content, so they reassigned variables to make the equation more statistically significant. The outcome of the study showed that there was a negative relationship between per capita personal income and living in a city with a sports team. This finding meant that per capita personal income is lower if the city you are residing in contains a sports team. Results also showed that there is no effect on the growth in real per capita income and living in a city with a sports team (Coates and Humphreys, 1999). The importance of the Coates and Humphreys study is

that it is one of the first to describe the presence of a sports team's impact on a resident's personal income.

In 2003, Coates and Humphreys again sought to explain the impact professional sports teams have on the retail and service economy of the city in which they are located. They did this by studying the employment rates of the city and individual earnings of residents. The retail and service industries were studied because these are the areas normally discussed as gaining a positive economic impact when a new team or stadium is brought in to the city. The same 37 U.S. cities as in their previous research were used in this study, and information was gathered from the Regional Economic Information System over a 17-year time span. The final results showed that an increase in the amusement and recreation sectors of the economy was offset by a decrease in other areas of the economy (Coates and Humphreys, 2003). Coates and Humphreys conclude that money spent on sports and sports-related areas is a substitute for other types of spending, instead of an increase in overall spending, and therefore has no real impact on the economy. Their study is significant because it shows that sports teams have no positive economic impact on the cities in which they reside. Instead, they have a neutral effect in transferring money from one area of the city to the area around the stadium (Coates and Humphreys, 2003).

Zimbalist (1998), a well-known researcher, has conducted numerous research projects in the area of stadium economics. He is well-known in the sports industry and is quoted frequently by other scholars and in newspaper articles. His 1998 study sought to combine past research studies to show that sports teams do not produce a significant

positive impact on the cities in which they are based. His study is divided into three sections: past research on sports economic impact studies, perceived problems with studies that point to a positive economic impact with cities that have a sports team, and the specific situations that would have to arise for a city to experience a positive economic impact from a sports team. The past research he reviews in his own study are those that have all been previously discussed in this literature review.

Zimbalist (1998) also found a negative impact between the presence of a sports team in a city and their subsequent economic impact on the city. These findings include the theories of diverted spending from other entertainment areas instead of increased spending, out-of-town visitors not spending as much as anticipated, and large salaries from the players going into their savings instead of back into the economy (Zimbalist, 1998). The two situations that would help determine a positive economic impact would be using a new stadium as part of an urban redevelopment plan and working closely with surrounding businesses and setting up lease terms that are fair to the city. Zimbalist argues that since sports leagues have a great deal of power, they tend to run over the city and use that as leverage to make the city responsible for public taxes for their funding.

On a related note, Wirtz's article in the March 2001 *Fedgazette*, a regional economic newspaper, discusses the idea of stadiums as "loss leaders" (p. 5) to the city in which they reside, since new teams have difficulty in repaying their construction costs, let alone making revenue for the first five years (Wirtz, 2001). Wirtz mentions that several of the studies that review economic impact are analyzed by associations that have an interest in the facility, such as convention and visitors bureaus or businesses in the

immediate area. This may cause an exaggeration in the figures to help get proposals for funding passed by the city. In reality, “the economic impact of a minor league baseball team is equivalent to a large pet shop in terms of revenue” (Wirtz, 2001, p. 5). While new spending is brought into the city, it is often associated with economic activity, instead of economic impact. Wirtz (2001) defines economic activity as all spending related to a sporting event and economic impact as new spending that would not occur without the event. Most of the spending is simply replacing money that would have been spent elsewhere in the city had the sporting event not taken place. The spending associated with the sporting event typically goes toward lower wage industries like restaurants and lodging, each of which does not have a large impact on per capita income (Wirtz, 2001). One of the incentives for having a sports team in the city is to increase the amount of new spending from tourists outside the city. However, most visitors to the city come for other reasons than just to simply see a sporting event and would have visited with or without the event taking place. Wirtz’ final comments discuss the overselling of economic benefits and the underselling of public good and community pride benefits.

Recently, research has turned to the contingent valuation method (CVM) to estimate the value of the public goods generated by a sports team. CVM is used by economists to estimate the economic values of goods, primarily in the environmental area. Johnson and Whitehead were the first to apply this method to a sports’ team in 2000. They looked at the possibility of a new basketball arena for the University of Kentucky, as well as a new stadium for a minor league baseball team; in both cases, the value was not great enough to justify public financing of these particular projects.

In 2001, Johnson, Groothius, and Whitehead took the approach a step further by applying the CVM approach to a major league sports team, the NHL franchise, the Pittsburgh Penguins. A survey was designed and broken into three sections. The first asked questions about media consumption of Penguins hockey; the second section contained situational questions concerning participants' willingness to assist the team financially with a new stadium or with keeping the team in Pittsburgh; and the final section discussed the impact the Penguins had on civic pride (Johnson, Groothius, & Whitehead, 2001). The results of the study showed that only half of the participants would be willing to contribute financially to the team to ensure they stayed in the area. Overall, it was found that the value of public goods generated by the Penguins may not be enough to substantiate large public subsidies.

Three years later in 2005, Johnson, Mondello, and Whitehead used the CVM approach to determine if the value of goods from an NFL team, the Jacksonville Jaguars, validated the amount of public funding used to acquire the team. The same survey was used from their prior studies, and the value of the Jaguars was estimated at \$36.5 million as compared to the \$121 million government-funded renovation that had been approved for the stadium. The results showed the same findings from the previous two studies – the value of the sports team as a public good was not enough to outweigh the government subsidies used for the team.

The above research covers the studies conducted by researchers in looking at the economic impacts of sports teams on the cities in which they reside. All of the researchers came to similar conclusions that a sports team does not have a positive

economic impact on the city and can in some cases may have a negative impact on the city.

Popular Press Perceptions of Publicly Funded Stadiums

Despite the results of the above studies, the promise of economic benefits of a team's presence in a city continues to be the number one reason supporters of a new team or stadium use to rally the citizens of a city behind them. All of the following newspaper articles deal with publicly funded stadiums and the city residents' positive and negative opinions about them. Most of these articles discuss the idea that the economic benefits of a stadium will outweigh the money the taxpayers will have to pay to build the stadium.

On August 13th, 2005, a press release was sent out from Arlington Mayor Robert Cluck's office concerning a new stadium for the Dallas Cowboys in Arlington, Texas. The resulting article discussed an economic study conducted by proponents for the stadium who concluded that this new stadium could bring in an estimated \$7 billion to the city over the next 30 years (Report, 2004). This study stated that Arlington could add \$238 million a year to its economy by helping to build the new \$650 million stadium. These figures were cited as being too optimistic by other economists. However, the economic benefits are attributed to stadium naming rights, increased tourism, and increased hotel and restaurant revenues (Report, 2004). While the economic study results discussed in this article may be accurate, and the Cowboys' stadium might be an exception, its results of positive economic impact counter all of the studies that have been conducted in the past decade.

Similarly, Portland, Oregon was contemplating acquiring a new team in 1994, and city officials were trying to catch the eye of the Montreal Expos in their big move. In a front page article on June 13, 2004 in *The Oregonian*, Ted Sickinger discussed the problems with the assumptions of the benefits of a city hosting a major league team. He discusses the assumption of a major league team drawing 28,000 fans for 81 games a year for 25 years as out of the question. While 28,000 fans is the average for all major league baseball teams, the average for 6 small-market teams comparable to Portland is only 26,500 (Sickinger, 2004, p. A01). It has been found that the excitement over a new team will spur heightened attendance for the first year, but that will drop off quickly as the team becomes more of a fixture, especially if the team does not continue winning.

A second assumption being made by Portland's stadium proposal committee states that income taxes on players' salaries will be sufficient in repaying the \$124 million worth of stadium financing. This estimate assumes that a team payroll would average at least \$75 million, which is extremely aggressive for a small-town market, especially considering the average team payroll has been steadily decreasing for the past 2 years (Sickinger, 2004, p. A01). In looking at the six other major league teams located in cities considered most comparable to Portland, the average team payroll would be closer to \$34.5 million. The last assumption is that 4, 860 seat licenses would be sold to large corporations for \$5,000 a piece amounting to \$25 million upfront. These seat licenses only give companies the opportunity to later purchase these as season tickets and assume that 1,000 companies would have to spend \$20,000 each to achieve this estimate.

While the Portland Trailblazers (NBA) were cited as proof that this is possible, adding competition into this market might take away money from both teams.

In a rebuttal written to the editor of *The Oregonian* by Andrews and Dunham (2004), two supporters of bringing a major league baseball team to Portland claimed, “One of the most common mistakes in the debate about major league baseball in Portland is to cite generic academic studies that claim the economic impact is minimal” (Andrews & Dunham, 2004, p. B09). They believe that these studies were only true for a new stadium for an existing team and not valuable in their specific case of a new stadium for a new team. Andrews and Dunham argue reasons for believing in large economic benefits include a large increase in the city as a tourism attraction, bringing overnight tourists and out-of-state visitors from Washington. Because of the close location to the border between Oregon and Washington, 1,885 permanent jobs could be created by the ballpark, resulting in increased revenue to restaurants and bars and future player tax revenue income benefiting the city (Andrews & Dunham, 2004).

In Washington D.C. in 2005, there was an ongoing debate over the building of a new major league baseball stadium. On September 30th, the mayor’s office released a statement trying to sell the benefits of this new stadium. The statement claimed money from ticket sales would go to improve recreational facilities in the area for residents’ use, as well as create jobs and improve other facilities in the local area (Holly, 2004). The mayor’s reasoning also included the branding of the area as a large sports venue and media location.

Twenty days later, a new study was released from 90 economists hired to investigate the situation and assess the probability of large economic benefits of buying a team for the city. The group found the stadium would not generate economic benefits, as the mayor had hoped (Statement from, 2004). The study concluded that the stadium would shift some entertainment spending from Maryland and Virginia, but not enough to cover the tax dollars that would be spent in building the stadium (Statement from, 2004). Even though taxes would not fall directly on residents, they would be added to businesses, which could result in higher prices and lower wages for residents to help balance out the new stadium tax.

A second area in the same situation as Washington D.C. was Loudoun County, Virginia which was hoping to acquire the Montreal Expos when they moved. Officials revealed little about their financing plan and said they could not put a dollar amount on the possible benefits the county could incur. County officials were in a debate about the benefits for the county. An analyst, and proponent of the new stadium, claimed that 2,671 jobs would be created, while the executive director of fiscal policy said that only a couple hundred of these jobs would go to residents of the area (Laris, 2004). Zimbalist (1998) was quoted in this debate as having previously said to not anticipate job creation simply by the building of a new stadium. He also said that most stadiums will come out economically neutral; thus, very few have a positive result like proponents for the stadium claimed. (Laris, 2004).

Some analysts claim the money can be better spent elsewhere, while one academic expert in the area claims that “proponents of public investments...dramatically

overstate the payback residents can count on from big-time sports complexes” (Laris, 2004, p. B04). One of the benefits Loudoun County hoped to receive was the residential growth that will occur near the stadium; however James Burton, supervisor of Board of Supervisors, said “Why would somebody want to move to Loudoun County simply because there’s a baseball stadium there, when they could just watch the game at night on cable without dealing with the traffic and congestion?” (Laris, 2004, p. B04).

The above articles appear to have the same reasoning for and against a new stadium. Some tend to think the benefits on the economy will be worth the money in tax dollars, while others think the economic benefits will not outweigh the price they have to pay for the team. Most proponents of new sports teams tend to look at the previous research and claim that it does not apply to them because they are in a different situation. This subject matter continues to be one of constant public debate, no matter which city is looking to add a sports team.

Intangible Benefits

All of the research above points to a lack of economic impact on the community. This means that sports teams will soon have to begin proving they have a positive impact on the city in non-economic ways. There is another side of this argument – the intangible benefits to a city with a new team and stadium. Research on this topic has just begun; however, several scholars note the importance of the intangible benefits and community spirit that results from the presence of a sports team in a city. Intangible benefits are those that residents receive from a sports team in a non-monetary sense. They are hard to

quantify and are instead defined by people's perceptions of the team and overall community approval. Howard and Crompton (1995) break these intangible benefits into four different categories: increased community visibility, enhanced community image, stimulation of other development, and psychic income. Each of these four areas of intangible benefits is discussed in the following research and is also the main focus of my research.

Community visibility is captured by the national media coverage that surrounds professional sporting events. Several of the above newspaper articles discuss the possibility of gaining national media coverage by building a new stadium or bringing in a new team. Increased national media and national publicity is an intangible benefit mentioned in all of the research looked at in this thesis. It is my argument that the increase in status of a city's public image is important to the tourism sector to draw out-of-state visitors. Increased media attention will put the team, as well as the city, in the limelight and in the front of people's minds. This attention will also play a factor in civic pride and admiration by the city's residents.

On a related note, community image is the perceived reputation of the city by other cities. There is much discussion about how a city cannot be a major player without a major league sports team (Howard & Crompton, 1995). Included in this discussion are ideas of community self-esteem. Community self-esteem can be shown by people's responses to and their perceptions of three criteria: how they view themselves, how they view the city they live in, and how they believe they and their city are viewed by other cities around the United States (Eckstein & Delaney, 2002).

Another key concept, stimulation of other development, is broken into three different sectors: proximate development, complementary development, and general development (Howard & Crompton, 1995). Proximate development is the area around the sports facility that is built up as part of one development project, i.e., the reconstruction of a downtown area. Complementary development refers to the businesses or additional facilities that must be built to support the sports team, i.e., restaurants and souvenir stores. General development includes the companies and residences that may be brought to the city because of the media attention and reputation directly related to the sporting event.

Psychic income, the final concept, is the emotional connection that residents receive from the presence of the sports team even if they do not actually attend the games. This includes pride when the team is doing well and social bonding between family and friends, as well as among the community as a whole over the time of their team's success. The concept also includes the positive responses demonstrated by the team's community outreach with local charities and the positive effect they have on the lives of people in their community (Howard & Crompton, 1995).

Intangible Benefits Studies and Reports

Swindell and Rosentraub (1998) conducted a study assessing the economic and intangible benefits of sports teams in the Indianapolis area. They found economic returns to be greatly exaggerated and overly optimistic and so they turned to the question – can intangible rewards from the presence of teams warrant the investment of public

resources? (Swindell & Rosentraub, 1998). Five additional questions were asked to assess the level of community pride of the citizens: 1) How important are cultural and sporting events in making you feel proud to be a resident?, 2) What is your perception of your city's national reputation?, 3) Which activities are talked about most by people not from Indianapolis?, 4) Which activities bring your friends and family to the area?, and 5) Would the loss of a given event hurt the reputation of the community? (Swindell & Rosentraub, 1998). The results showed that sports teams help bring civic pride and a high profile image to the city, as well as national publicity. Swindell & Rosentraub discovered that intangible benefits were valued most by fans and increased attendance at an event increased an event's importance in establishing pride. The citizens of Indianapolis felt pride in having so many successful teams in their city and enjoyed being a part of the national sports news.

Moreover, Eckstein and Delaney (2002) focused on the economic impact and intangible benefits that came about in a city due to building a new professional sports stadium. Ten cities were studied with new stadiums in different stages of the construction process. In each of these cities, five to ten members of the city council, as well as numerous "regular" citizens, were asked to talk about their views of the stadium and the sports team in relation to their city. From these discussions, the idea of community self-esteem and collective conscience was found to be most effective in small cities or in cities in the southern and western parts of the United States (Eckstein & Delaney, 2002). They also concluded that there is rarely economic growth stimulated from a new stadium, which in turn will lead supporters to focus on intangible benefits to

the city (Eckstein & Delaney, 2002). Eckstein and Delaney's study is important to the way in which teams go about soliciting a new stadium. Since it has been proven that the intangible benefits are greater than the tangible benefits, this seems to be the area proponents for the new stadiums need to highlight to the city.

Popular Press Perceptions on Intangible Benefits

Intangible benefits are not merely discussed in research studies. They are also part of news articles dealing with new stadiums. Albuquerque, New Mexico is a unique case because in 2001, it lost its long-standing baseball team due to failure to build a new stadium to keep the team from relocating. Mayor Martin Baca lamented the loss of the team and stated that sports demonstrate the quality of life in a city (Shephard, 2000). Mayor Baca claimed every major city in the United States has at least one major league sports team, increasing both the value and team pride of that city.

To figure out a solution to bring a team back home, Albuquerque turned to three other minor league baseball teams to evaluate their success and discovered a need for a more aggressive, community-based campaign. The government leaders in Jacksonville, Florida, Portland, Oregon, and Richmond, Virginia, all view a sport team's primary function in the city as developing the community in which they reside. Each has a sports commission that looks for and ensures economic benefits to the city, and each city also sees "sports in terms of what it does for a community's image, economic development, and vitality – sports can be the life of the community" (Shephard, 2000, p.4). Here the focus is on defining the images of these cities through sports.

In 2002, Albuquerque began a major renovation of their old stadium and brought in a new team, called the Isotopes, named after the baseball team from Albuquerque that was featured on the *Simpsons* (FOX) television show. The Isotopes have made a conscious effort to gain recognition in the community by taking an active role in the local schools, hosting youth league camps, and hosting fundraisers to contribute to local charities and New Mexico military families with loved ones in the military (Shephard, 2000).

Similarly, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell talks of his plan for “Community Building Through Hometown Sports” in an article in *The Morning Call* (Assad & Sheehan, 2004, p. A1). Academic studies concerning minor league baseball have shown they bring no economic impact to the community, but they do bring a quality of life and community spirit for the families that currently live there or are looking to move there. Related with this, Kraus has documented a statistical analysis of every county in the nation between 1950-1990 who had a sports team. She found that cities hosting minor league baseball for long periods of time actually had higher increases in the number of businesses in the area, families with children in the city, as well as higher education levels and higher median income for residents (Assad & Sheehan, 2004). While there is no evidence this is a direct correlation among all of these factors, Kraus emphasizes the way a minor league baseball team can bring the community together and improve the perception of the city, as well as bring regional media attention to the community.

In Trenton, NJ, an increase in positive community image is apparent thanks in part to the media. Despite the lack of economic benefits, the minor league baseball team

introduced to the city has changed the appearance of the city and turned the downtown area into one of the most desired places to live in the United States (Ward, 2002). The stadium has helped re-start downtown re-development and has increased the safety in the downtown area. The local newspaper has been cooperative with pointing out the changes and showing residents the goals for the completed work. One of the city's goals was to turn the downtown into a place to shop and enjoy after work hours. With the addition of a new stadium and the enhanced image of the area, they are able to accomplish these goals.

While most of the studies above have proven that there is no economic advantage to owning a team, many cities still believe that a sports team will bring increased revenue and boost per capita income. Even though this argument may not be true, perception is a very important factor. If citizens believe a team will make the city more prosperous, they will be in favor of a new stadium even at the risk of a decrease in revenue for the city. Therefore, it is important for citizens to be informed of the true impact the team could have on the city.

Each of the above studies used a variety of sports cities. The only group to use all thirty-seven of the major league sports cities was Coates and Humphreys (1999). While some researchers believe all sports fans think alike, it is important to use each city individually because they are each unique and bring something different to the forefront. Each of the news articles that talk about the economic impact on the city, quote that their city is different than all the others that have been researched. Since this is true, not all cities will have the same results as the above studies and a few may even have positive results, depending on the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of the team.

While most of the research in this area of sport focuses on economic impact and intangible benefits, I looked at the emotional connections that occur between a citizen of a particular city and the hometown team. Emotional connections fall under the intangible benefits side of a sports team. By connecting the theories of Aristotle with the above sports research, I hope to understand the emotional connection between fans and sports teams.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is informed by Aristotle's three artistic proofs: logos, pathos and ethos. These theories help to demonstrate why sports fans have a certain affinity to a specific team, and how their emotions can sometimes take over their logic in regards to decisions surrounding the sports team in their city.

Logos

Logos is the Greek word for "word" and is defined as "a thought expressed in words" (Herrick, 1997, pg. 86). Logos focuses on the internal consistency, clarity of the message, and is the equivalent to the logic of an argument (Gunn, 2005). Logos is the logic appeal that a message has on its audience, including the reasoning and support one gives for an argument. Aristotle used logos as a study of logic, specifically a study of arguments. He was concerned with the way people reason through their arguments, particularly as it concerns their political decisions.

Logos is an important role in this research topic due to the decision making that occurs when a new sports team is brought to a city. Many times there are facts presented on both sides of the decision and logic is used to distinguish the truth from falsified information. If logos is not understood, then decisions will be made based on incorrect reasoning.

Pathos

Pathos means “suffering or experience” in Greek and is commonly associated with emotional appeals (Gunn, 2005, para.2). Pathos refers to the sympathies and emotional connections that an audience may have with a speaker over their message. Pathos can be a very strong force because it pulls the audience closer to the speaker by forging a connection using the audience’s emotions and imaginations. The main point of using pathos is to make a connection between the emotional appeal of an argument and an individual’s judgment on their opinion of the argument (Herrick, 1997).

Several of my research questions are based on this proof because often one’s emotions can overtake one’s logic in decision making. I looked into what emotional connections are established between sports teams and their fans. Also, what effect these emotional connections have on the decision making process of the fans and if this outweighs their logical decision-making?

Ethos

The Greek word for “character” is ethos, which is also defined as the credibility and authority of the speaker (Gunn, 2005). The impact of ethos is related to how credible the speaker appears. To achieve credibility through a message, Aristotle argues that you need to portray intelligence, virtue, and goodwill. One’s credibility will have an impact on how well the message is interpreted by the audience. When a speaker is evaluated as credible, the message then becomes more credible (Herrick, 1997). Ethos should only be

evaluated by the way the message itself is worded according to Aristotle, but the outside reputation of the speaker can, at times, come into play.

In this research study, ethos can be looked at by the speakers on the different sides of the debates over sports related decisions. As seen in the above research from the news stories, newspapers tend to take a positive stance on the building of new teams or stadiums. The people who are proponents of the issue tend to be people in high political positions in the city. Depending on how credible and honest these people and media are perceived can play a large part on how the message is received and believed by the public.

Research Using Logos, Pathos, and Ethos

Research studies using Aristotle's rhetoric are found in several different areas, including communication, persuasion, political speeches, legal debates, and advertising. One of the most common uses is in the reviewing of political speeches to understand the power of persuasion. Docan (2002) reviewed a speech presented by President George W. Bush shortly after the September 11th catastrophe. In analyzing a transcription of his dialogue, Docan was able to identify all three areas of rhetoric in his speech. President Bush used ethos to persuade his audience that he was a credible speaker by his non-verbal actions of hugging the firefighters and just by being present at the center of the tragedy. Logos was used throughout President Bush's speech in his arguments that "the country is united, still alive, and ready to be heard," as well as in his argument that the nation was united in this time of tragedy (Docan, 2001). In this speech, pathos was

identified as the most persuasive element. Bush was able to use pathos effectively by thanking everyone for their help and sending out his love and compassion to all those hurting around the nation. He also used a fear appeal to intimidate those who caused the destruction, as well as to motivate and inspire Americans that retaliation would come.

Similarly, Green (2001) analyzed a speech printed on the Surgeon General's Web site to uncover Aristotle's rhetoric. He was able to pinpoint all three proofs throughout the speech. The photograph of the Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, in his uniform with flags in the background demonstrates ethos by showing Dr. Satcher's good character and credentials. Pathos was uncovered in his use of "we" and "our." By including this language, he creates an automatic connection with the reader and makes them feel like they are part of the solution. Dr. Satcher also does a good job of establishing logos, or logical arguments, on his Web site by quoting statistics.

Advertising is another area that uses rhetoric as a persuasive tool to target prospective clients. The most recent area of advertising to use rhetoric is e-commerce on the Web. Several studies came out during 1998-2002 that expressed the significance of using rhetoric in a company's Web site. Winn (2000) suggests that pathos (emotional appeal) is a vital part of a Web design's persuasive power. Pathos is demonstrated through the interactivity of the site and the design elements. Since purchasing goods is generally seen as an emotional experience, the use of emotional triggers on a Web site can increase the experience and connect the consumer with the product (Winn, 2000). While pathos may have the strongest influence on e-commerce, logos and ethos are also important. Logos, or logical arguments, are displayed in price presentation, the product

information and the product choices (Winn & Beck, 1999). Ethos is determined through the credibility of the site and the corporate image, such as the amount of security components and customer service options. Due to the number of e-commerce Web sites, the persuasiveness of each one is crucial to the survival of the business.

Another use of rhetoric is in legal debates, where persuasion is critical to attorneys on both sides of the case. Ethos, or a speaker's credibility, is a necessity in the courtroom. For a judge and jury to believe in an argument, they must find the speaker trustworthy and likable. This comes from specific traits, such as character, competence, confidence, and believability (Walker, 2005). Lawyers must take these characteristics to heart and make sure they display them in the courtroom in order to have credibility with the jury. Further, reliance on logos, or logical arguments, is crucial in a case setting. Attorneys from both sides must be able to present a case that is backed up with evidence and case law. The argument must be well-planned out to sound convincing. Finally, the third proof, pathos, is the emotional side of the argument. This comes into play when appealing to the jury's emotional side. Pathos plays an important role because it can affect the way the jury thinks about the logical argument. Attorneys will use emotional appeals to set the right mood for the court, whether it be sympathy for the victim or a desire for fairness. These three proofs all work together to make a lawyer's case persuasive in court.

Although, rhetoric has not been specifically applied to the sports field, I feel that the idea of persuasion is present in the sports industry, in addition to the above research. My research study looks into the effects Aristotle's proofs have on fans of particular

sports teams. It will primarily focus on the idea of logos versus pathos, the logical decisions versus the emotional connections residents have toward sports teams. By using these theories, I hope to have a better understanding of the persuasive appeals used by sports teams to build strong connections with their fans.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Two types of qualitative methods were used in my study – focus groups and in-depth interviews. The value of using qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, over quantitative methods, such as surveys, includes the opportunity for participants to respond to questions in their own terms without set responses, as well as the opportunity for more complex and detailed responses to arise (Bertrand, 2005). This study seeks to find emotional connections that are difficult to test through quantitative means because they require more than just a pre-determined set of answers. Qualitative methods, specifically focus groups and interviews, allow collection of in-depth answers from participants that can better answer my research questions. This study will not be statistically generalizable, but will yield some insight as to the emotional connection between these participants from Dallas and Houston and their sports teams.

Focus Group – Methodology

Two focus groups were conducted, one in each of the two cities involved in this study. These groups helped me gather information from citizens living in Dallas and Houston. The focus groups were made up of seven to ten people each, and I used snowball sampling to recruit people to participate in this study. Snowball sampling is a method of selection where participants are recruited to be a part of the focus group by other participants in the study (Gay, 2003).

The benefit of the focus group over individual interviews is the ability to view the group dynamics that occur through group interaction (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Focus groups are stimulated not just by the questions coming from the moderator but by the answers and experiences of the group members around them. The way groups discuss and debate these issues is often comparable to the dynamics in social discourse going on in a more informal, non-research study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The focus group guide (Appendix E) began with questions concerning the participants' views of their hometowns, as well as their thoughts on how other people perceive their city. From there, questions centered on the NFL team in their city, discussing their opinions of the team and what has the most influence on those opinions. The focus group continued with questions about the importance of the particular team to their city, as well as what participants anticipate the consequences would be if the teams were to move. Discussion moved toward the benefits and emotional connections that participants gain from their hometown team. Questions were posed to participants about their opinions regarding assisting the team financially, as well as their opinions of the opposing team (e.g., Dallas participants opinions of the Texans, Houston participants opinions of the Cowboys).

Before the focus group and interviews began, consent forms (Appendix C) were distributed to all participants. These consent forms were approved through the Texas Tech Institutional Review Board (January 18, 2006) and discussed the confidentiality of all participants in this study. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to keep their identities, answers, and opinions confidential to the public. All information with their

actual names was kept in a locked drawer and on a password protected computer program.

Also distributed at the beginning of the focus group was a seven question survey (Appendix D) to assess each participant's level of fandom. The questions were designed based on the survey described in Johnson, Groothius, & Whitehead in 2002. Questions were asked regarding participants media consumption of their particular NFL team, including: how often do you attend games?, how often do you watch games on T.V.?, how often do you read about the team?, and how often do you discuss the team with family and friends? Participants were also asked to rank how strong of a fan they consider themselves to be on a scale from one to ten. The final two questions asked how much money the individual is willing to pay each year in taxes to either keep the team in the city or build them a new stadium. The answers from the survey were analyzed and used to organize the participants into different fan levels.

The first level of fandom is a **non-fan**. These are participants who have not watched any games this season, who talk about the team less than once a month, and who give themselves a fan ranking of a one or two. The next level up is a **minimal fan**. This is someone who watches one to two games a year, talks about the team once a month, and ranks themselves between a three and a five on the ten-point scale. A **mild fan** is someone who watches three to eight games a season, discusses the team once a week, and considers themselves a six to eight on the rankings. A **strong fan** is the highest level, and this is someone who watches nine to sixteen games a season, discusses the team at least once a day, and ranks themselves a nine or ten on the fandom scale.

The focus groups were videotaped to record not only the verbal responses from participants, but also the non-verbal responses that are not apparent through audio tapes. This also diminished problems with speaker identification. Videotaping must be used cautiously because it can be intrusive and participants may be more self-conscious when they know they are being videotaped (Bertrand, 2005). To help overcome this possible limitation, I assured the participants the videotapes would only be used to assist in the transcription process and would never be shown to anyone outside of the study.

To analyze the focus groups, the video tape was transcribed by myself so as to keep the data from the different groups transcribed as similarly as possible. Once the tape was transcribed, it was analyzed again to record participants' body language, such as nodding in agreement to statements or laughing at comments. These non-verbal observations were also written into the transcript and used when analyzing the focus groups. After the videos were transcribed, I searched through the transcripts to identify themes within the groups, including similarities and differences between the two groups.

In-Depth Interview – Methodology

After the focus groups were completed, I conducted four in-depth interviews with participants from each of the two focus groups. To select the interviewees, I reviewed the transcripts of the focus groups to select those members who were not as outspoken as the others. This allowed me to gain more information from these participants, as well as expand on the themes discovered in the groups. The number of interviews reflects the

redundancy in answers which were similar to the answers received in the focus groups, making this study more valid (Gay, 2003).

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), interviews are used to validate and verify information that may have been acquired through other sources. This allowed me to go back and clarify some of their answers and opinions that were discussed in the focus group. It also gave me a chance to go over new topic areas that may have been brought up in the course of the group discussion, as well as any topics that were not mentioned that may be pertinent to my study.

Interviews can help a researcher obtain a person's attitudes, opinions and motivations for thinking a certain way on a specific topic (Berger, 2000). Since my study focuses on people's opinions, attitudes, and perceptions about sports teams, interview techniques are an effective way to achieve these answers.

The method of interviewing used as a follow-up to the focus group is based on a semi-structured, general interview guide (Appendix F). This approach will have a basic format of what is to be covered and discussed in the session, but will allow for digressions and interactions by group members that are productive to the research (Bertrand, 2005). This style of interviewing gives the interviewer the freedom to ask questions in different ways for different participants, allowing for several different ways to achieve the goals of the study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The in-depth interviews were conducted over the telephone, and questions were worded and arranged in a particular order so as to allow for ease in comparing the data collected with other in-depth interviews, as well as with the responses received in the

focus groups (Bertrand, 2005). This structured format maximizes the reliability and credibility of the findings of the interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The questions in the interviews were directly related to the points of discussion in the focus group. The objective of these interviews is to clarify opinions on the designated topics, determine what has influenced these study participants to have opinions, and to understand the motivations that cause these participants to act on these opinions in their decisions regarding the sports team (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The questions were formulated after the focus groups have been analyzed so as to use the follow-up interviews to expand on themes found in the focus groups. The interviews were recorded, and I later transcribed them. By transcribing these myself, I can help to ensure that each level of analysis was conducted in a similar way. Finally, the interviews were analyzed to look for themes and congruencies with the focus group analyses.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study and serve as the main focal point for the focus groups and in-depth interviews conducted:

- 1) What accounts for people's strong emotional connection to the NFL team in their city?
- 2) What are the most important benefits the citizens perceive that the city itself and the residents of the city receive from the presence of the NFL team in their city? Moreover, how are these benefits classified, i.e. monetary or emotional, etc.?
- 3) When making decisions concerning the team, such as acquiring a tax to pay for a new team or to build a new stadium, what do people base their decisions on?

4) Is there a different emotional connection between the Dallas Cowboys and their fans and the Houston Texans and their fans? If so, what can account for such differences?

By answering these questions, I hope to achieve a better understanding of why people have strong perceived connection with the sports team in their city. Further, I hope to understand the reasons people in the city are loyal to their team, as well as to see if this loyalty and emotional connection can cloud their logical decision-making abilities regarding sports teams and their demands on a city.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS

As mentioned, two focus groups were conducted for this study, one in Dallas and one in Houston. The Dallas group was made up of seven members who all currently live in Dallas/Ft. Worth, and the Houston group had nine participants from the Houston area. Different opinions and reactions were expressed in each of the focus groups; however, several of the same themes emerged in both groups. These themes were identified and expanded on through the follow-up interviews. Four members of each focus group were selected for these interviews. The themes found through this combination of methods include: viewpoint similarities on city and team, the importance of winning, the influence of family and friends on fan loyalty, the role of the media, financial non-support for teams, and contradictory opinions of the opposing teams.

Viewpoint similarities on city and team

The Dallas focus group appeared to have a positive view toward their city, as well as their football team. When describing their city, they mentioned the business side of Dallas and the shopping aspect. **Danielle** believes that people from outside the city view Dallas, “like a big vacation for them because they can go shopping and to Six Flags all in one place.” Moreover, there were no negative views expressed regarding the city of Dallas by study participants.

Overall, the participants also held positive views of the Dallas Cowboys. Out of the seven participants, one considered himself a strong fan, one a non-fan, and the other

five participants were in the middle as minimal to mild fans. The level of fandom was determined by the pre-focus group survey that asked participants how often they watched the team play, how often they read about the team in the newspaper, and how often they discussed the team with their friends. The final question on the survey was a ranking of how loyal of a fan they considered themselves on a scale of one to ten. Participants who considered themselves a 0-2 on the test were non-fans, 3-5 were minimal fans, 6-8 were mild fans, and 9-10 were strong fans.

Ben, the only **strong fan**, went as far as to say that, “everyone loves Dallas and the Cowboys.” Even those who only considered themselves **minimal** fans, spoke very highly and passionately about the Cowboys. The **non-fan Alex**, explained that he was not a fan due to the fact that he was originally from Canada where hockey was considered the top sport. When asked why the Cowboys were considered America’s Team, **Ben** explained, “Back in the early 90’s the Cowboys were a fairytale story, like a Cinderella story. Jimmy Johnson was the most loved coach...Jerry Jones was the owner who ruled with an iron fist. They had great Hall of Famers.”

Conversely, the Houston focus group seemed to have a negative view of their city, which may have in turn enhanced their negative view of the Texans. When asked about how they see their city and how others might view their city, they responded with negative words, including “dirty” (**Derek**), “crowded” (**Kevin**), “horrible pollution” (**Lauren**), and “humid” (**Chris**). Further, **Lauren** commented that people’s view of the city may be distorted based on “the studies out there that rank us as the city with the most pollution and the most overweight individuals.”

When asked about their general opinions of the Houston Texans, participants' opinions did not get any better, using words such as "terrible" (**Kevin**), "not a good team" (**Tanner**), and the "worst team in the NFL" (**Aaron**). Four of the nine participants did not view themselves a fan of the team at all, while the other five are **minimal** to **mild** level fans. The levels of fandom were determined using the same methods as in the Dallas focus group.

When discussing the team, **Chris** said, "When they [the Texans] first came, because it was a real big deal, everyone was a fan, and now they are terrible." **Jennifer** commented, "The hype is gone." Most of the respondents felt like there might be hope for the Texans in the future, especially with the number one draft pick this year. Kevin remarked, "I'm not going to stop being a fan just because they aren't playing well...I don't think they'll stay terrible forever!"

In sum, in both focus groups, participants' views of the city appeared to coincide with their views of their city's team. In Dallas, the participants all had positive views of their hometown, which was carried over to their positive views of their team. In Houston, the participants were negative in their descriptions of their home and were equally as negative in discussions of their team, the Texans. The two focus groups had very different opinions of their cities and NFL teams; however, they were similar in that both focus groups had the same opinion of both their city and their NFL team.

The Importance of Winning

Winning was an important theme in both focus groups, but was interpreted differently in each group. Discussion around the Cowboys centered on a positive history of winning and tradition. The idea of winning was mentioned ten times throughout the Dallas focus group. **Eric** commented on the Cowboys “history of winning,” which encouraged “football fans to jump on the bandwagon” because “no one likes to be affiliated with a team that is losing.” Several participants stated that a true fan should not care if the team is having a winning season; however, the amount of talk centering around the Cowboys winning championships and dominating the NFL seems to contradict such statements. **Lindsey** claims she got hooked on the Cowboys when they were “really good” and now when they are not doing as well, she remembers the “Glory Days and... the experience of always being a winner.”

Winning was mentioned eleven times throughout the Houston focus group; however, it was mentioned in four different ways and none of them was stated positively toward the Texans. The first, and most common mentioned theme, was the lack of wins with the Texans, as shown in **Kevin’s** comment, “they are a terrible team!” The word winning was also used in connection with the Cowboys and was brought up three different times. **Kevin** mentioned that “They have a lot of records,” and **Jennifer** remarked, “The Cowboys have a tradition of winning...” When discussing the popularity of a sports team, winning was used to emphasize which team was most popular at that moment in time. **Jennifer** commented that “people are more attracted to the winning team,” and **Chris** mentioned that the easiest way to determine which Houston sports team

is most popular at the time “just all depends on who is winning.” The final use of the word winning came when discussing the future of the Texans and what they can do to increase support. **Tanner** stated that if “the Texans started getting better and winning games...the city would have something to be proud of...they’ve [the Texans] got to start winning to gain public support.”

From these findings, the follow-up interviews with the members of the Houston focus group centered on the concept of winning. When asked what they thought the Texans could do to increase fan loyalty, all four participants, **Aaron, Allie, Lauren,** and **Brad**, said the team should start winning games. They also said a team’s winning or losing record is directly related to the fan’s loyalty to the team. **Allie** claimed, “Fans don’t like to watch their team lose,” and **Lauren** mentioned, “It is hard to be motivated...if you’re going to see the team lose.” **Brad** went a step further saying, “For the casual fan, winning and losing has a lot to do with the extent of their involvement...if their team starts losing then they will become a fan of the team that is winning.”

All in all, although most participants asserted a fan should be loyal to their team in all situations, both focus groups discussed the importance of winning frequently. Overall, both focus groups had the same opinions of winning. They both discussed the Cowboys and their winning records, as well as the Texans and their need for winning records.

The Influence of Family and Friends on Fan Loyalty

Everyone in the Dallas focus group agreed that a large part of loyalty towards a sports team comes from within your family. **Danielle, Ben,** and **Carol** recalled watching the Cowboys on TV with their family at a very young age. **Danielle** remarked, “My family has had the same four season tickets since I was little. Like, even when we moved away for a couple of years, my parents would still fly back for home games.” Watching and discussing Cowboys’ games is something **Danielle** does often with her family, even though, she does not believe she is as big of a Cowboys’ fan as the rest of her family. **Carol** remembers wearing “Cowboys’ shirts that went down to the ground,” but they were “cool ‘cuz that’s what my dad was wearing.”

Similarly, the importance of family and friends was also highly identified in the Houston focus group. **Chris** commented, “It’s usually what you grow up watching. It’s what you dad watches, so it transforms into what you watch.” **Tanner** and **Aaron** also agreed that family and friends have the strongest impact on your team loyalty. They mentioned this was even stronger when you are a child because you tend to look up to your parents and where their team loyalties lie. “Whenever you’re raised and your dad likes watching football and loves the Cowboys, you tend to do the same thing” (**Tanner**). Everyone agreed that the team you grow up watching tends to be the team you root for once you are grown up. Since the team you grow up watching tends to be the team your parents grew up watching, fan loyalty appears to stay within the family.

Both focus groups agreed that the influence of family and friends is the most important factor in team loyalty. They also agreed that most loyalties are formed at a

young age when you are easily influenced by your parents and their team loyalties. These loyalties are then passed down from generation to generation within a family.

The Role of the Media

Notable players from the Cowboys were mentioned several times throughout the discussion by participants, not only in the Dallas focus group, but also in the Houston focus group. The trio of Michael Irvin, Troy Aikman, and Emmett Smith were discussed as being an integral part of the Cowboys' appeal. **Ben** commented, "Just the way the media portrayed them in *Sports Illustrated* they became America's team," and **Alex** responded with "It's how you think of the team." **Carol** remarked, "It was those three who brought life to it all... and made everyone look at it [the Cowboys] and go 'Wow, the Cowboys are awesome!'" **Carol** also mentioned the commonly heard media phrase, "How 'bout them Cowboys?" She remarked, "Where did that phrase come from? I think the media really pushes and portrays that [view of the Cowboys]."

In **Eric's** follow-up interview, he focused on how the media "tends to put them [the Cowboys] in a positive spotlight for whatever reason, and this helps to overshadow their faults when the players get into trouble." He mentioned that the Cowboys' players' problems seem to disappear quickly, whereas with other teams, it hangs over them. **Eric** continued, "When the Cowboys were busted for a drug scandal, it was big news for a night or two but then it went away...unlike the whole Terrell Owens issues this past season that kept being brought up night after night." **Ben** took a similar approach in the follow-up interview saying he believes that the media has helped the team a lot by

“portraying the Cowboys as America’s team and by glorifying individual players, their characters, and their reputations on and off the field.” **Danielle**, however, took the opposite view in her follow-up interview stating, “The media has a negative effect...because they mostly show what they do wrong.”

The Houston focus group also agreed that the media can be very influential, but they did not give as many examples of this theme as in the Dallas group. Most of the talk surrounding the importance of the media was uncovered during the follow-up interviews where talk surrounded the Cowboys. **Aaron** claims, “The media helps draw in the bandwagon crowd, especially for the Cowboys.” **Allie** mentioned, “Every time the Cowboys play, the commentators overtly cheer for them.” **Lauren** believes, “the media has a large impact...[and] has helped make Dallas a well-known city...and [this] has made being associated with the Cowboys a very respected position.” **Brad** commented that the media loves to talk about the Cowboys because “the story line is juicier...and they are the team that everyone would like to see succeed because it promises for a great story line, but they are also the team everyone loves to hate.” Overall, there was no mention of any positive or negative coverage of the Texans, just that the media can be important to a team. **Lauren** did state, “If it weren’t for seeing them [the Texans] on ESPN, I wouldn’t know much about the Texans.”

In sum, when discussing the role of the media on fan loyalty, both focus groups discussed the media’s focus on the Dallas Cowboys, instead of the Houston Texans. Both groups spoke about notable players from the early 90’s and how their spotlight in the media was good media for the Dallas Cowboys. The Dallas group focused on all of

the positive media the Cowboys receive and how this has enhanced their image and given them the moniker of “America’s Team.” The Houston group was very similar in their responses to the question; however, one participant in each group focused on the negative role the media can have when highlighting team and player mistakes.

Financial Non-Support for Teams

When discussing financial support for the Dallas Cowboys in the recent controversy over a new stadium, all participants agreed that the team needed a new stadium, yet, none of them were willing to pitch in any of their own money to assist in financing it. **Lindsey** remarked, “I don’t want them to leave, but they make so much money, they can pay for their own darn stadium,” and **Ben** stated that “Jerry Jones can buy himself a new stadium!” **Danielle** did make an observation that older fans would contribute: “People who have been fans longer than most of us have been living would [contribute].”

The Dallas focus group believed the Cowboys to be a large part of Dallas, with **Eric** arguing, “Without the Cowboys, Dallas would not be the same city as it is today.” Similarly, **Danielle** stated, “The Cowboys are a part of the Dallas culture, they mean so much.” Participants realized that a lot of events and sponsorships are centered around the team, as well as companies bringing their clients to the game to conduct business. **Ben** remarked, “When we are winning...business freakin’ booms...if the Cowboys left, it would affect the little niche markets, like Cowboys restaurants, bars, apparel stores. It would be a trickle down effect for the city.” The rest of the group also agreed that the loss

of the Cowboys would be hard on the city economically, as well as hurt the city's reputation; yet, when asked about how much they would be willing to pay in taxes to keep the team in Dallas, the answer from participants was a resounding "NONE!" Even **Ben** who considered himself a "die-hard" fan, said he would only be willing to pay a minimal amount. Moreover, **Lindsey** commented, "There are so many other ways to raise money than taxing the residents. I feel like that would be a last resort type of thing."

The Houston group, as a whole, strongly supported the idea of a new stadium and thought its presence was great for the economy by its potential to bring in large venue events like the Super Bowl. However, when they were asked if they would have been willing to pay taxes to assist with the new stadium, only **Ben, Derek, Kevin** and **Alexis** said they would be willing to pay a limited amount of \$25-\$75 a year. When discussing if they would pay money to keep the Texans in Houston if they were looking to leave, the answer was a resounding "No." **Lauren** stated, "Houston existed just fine without the Texans for those couple of years, and I believe they could do it again."

In discussing the possibility of losing the Texans and how it would affect the reputation of the city, **Kevin** commented, "I think what team would ever want to start there again after the city has already lost two teams in a row? That's pretty pathetic for the fourth largest city in the U.S." **Brad** believed, "The effects would be felt by some, but not all, and life would continue as usual." **Jennifer** mentioned that a loss of a professional team "would make it hard to compete with other large cities like Dallas." **Derek** and **Chris** mentioned the economical loss that would occur to the city due to a loss in related sales and the stadium bond that would still have to be paid. **Chris** said, "If it

were to happen in the next couple of years, I don't think it would phase anyone at all, except economically. Now if it were to happen 20 years from now, I could see it hurting the city both emotionally and economically.” However, **Brad** did not believe the city would be hurt economically arguing, “I think the money will still be spent in the economy, but instead of in that area of town [where the stadium is located], it might be on the other side of town.”

In both groups, participants were strongly opposed to contributing monetary support for the teams. Both the Dallas and Houston groups were in favor for new stadiums for their teams, but only members of the Houston group were willing to contribute a minimal amount of their own finances to the construction of a new stadium. This seems contradictory since the Dallas group had stronger loyalty towards the Cowboys than the Houston group did for the Texans. Both groups were against paying taxes to keep the teams in their cities. This is not surprising in the case of Houston, since they did not seem to be as supportive of their team; however, it is surprising for Cowboys fans who said they would be devastated if the team left there city.

Contradictory Opinions of Opposing Teams

When the Dallas group was asked about their opinions of the Houston Texans, **Lindsey** started laughing and said, “I had kind of forgot about them until you just now said something!” This sentiment was reflected by all of the Dallas group participants. **Ben** also described the Cowboys as “the only football team in Texas for so long, until the Texans came around.” This comment was made three separate times in the focus group. It

is worth mentioning because it is untrue. Before the Texans, there were the Oilers who were in Houston for close to 40 years and were founded the same year as the Cowboys. This shows a disconnect between the participants in the Dallas focus group from the other sports teams in the state.

None of the members of the Dallas focus group considered themselves a fan of the Texans, but they did say they would cheer for them only because they are another Texas team. **Lindsey** commented, “You can be a Texans fan first and then a Cowboys fan, but you can’t be a Cowboys fan and then a Texans fan,” and the rest of the participants agreed. When asked about Texans’ fans’ loyalty, the group agreed that they have not had time yet to build up a strong loyalty like the Cowboys’ fans have. **Ben** mentioned, “They are still so young,” and **Lindsey** responded with, “I don’t think they’ve had the time to build up tradition.”

The last topic discussed in the Houston focus group was their opinions of the Dallas Cowboys. Everyone in the group, except for Allie, appeared to like the Cowboys and held positive opinions of them. **Allie** mentioned, “I think they all seem stuck up. You only hear the bad about them, like they are all cheaters and druggies.” However, **Jennifer** commented that, “They’ve been imbedded in all Texans,” and **Aaron** believes, “they are a good team and good for the sport in general.” This group also picked up on the nickname, “America’s Team,” claiming it comes from their “star players” (**Chris**), “a strong reputation” (**Aaron**), and “an established team” (**Jennifer**). **Aaron** and **Lauren** claimed to feel more loyalty towards the Cowboys than the Texans. They said this was because the Cowboys have been around longer. Their loyalty switched from the Oilers to

the Cowboys after the Oilers left, and they have never switched back to their hometown team.

In contrast, when the group was asked about their opinion of the previous Houston team, the Oilers, everyone was extremely excited and positive. **Lauren** even commented, “After the Oilers left, I haven’t been able to picture football there again. Houstonians were devastated. It was almost as if our city was not good enough to support an NFL team.” This passion regarding the previous football team may have something to do with the negative views of the newer team, the Texans. **Allie** even commented on the difficulty with the newer team. “It was like the entire city of Houston and NFL fans everywhere had to decide if they would cheer for the Texans or remain loyal to the Oilers.” **Chris** noted, “I think Houston might still have a bitter taste in their mouths from the Oilers.” When asked if they thought these feelings would eventually disappear, they all believed over time they would die down.

Both focus groups had very different opinions on their rival football team. The Dallas focus group appeared to be indifferent towards the Texans. Most of them did not care one way or another about them, but said they would root for them if they were not playing the Cowboys simply because they were from Texas. On the other hand, the Houston group had strong feelings of either like or dislike for the Cowboys. Some of them even considered themselves stronger Cowboys’ fans than Texans’ fans. The Houston group was in agreement on their opinions of their previous team, the Oilers. The Oilers were well liked, and there appeared to be a sense of loss with their moving away in 1996.

While each focus group had a different feel to it, there were several themes that resonated in both groups: viewpoint similarities on their city and their team, the importance of winning, the influence of family and friends on fan loyalty, the role of the media, financial non-support for teams, and contradictory opinions of the opposing teams. Each focus group touched on these themes, but their opinions on these topics were what set the two groups apart. The similarities and differences expressed through these themes led to the findings.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study sought to achieve a better understanding of why people have a strong emotional connection with the sports team in their city. The study focused on two cities – Dallas, TX and Houston, TX – of similar size that had NFL teams that had been in the city for different periods of time. By holding focus groups and follow-up interviews, I hoped to look at the similarities and differences that emerged with each group to see the level of fan loyalty and the reasons behind it. In looking over the research questions that directed this study, all of them were answered through the focus group and expanded on with the follow-up interviews. All four of the questions had interesting findings, but left other questions to expand on through further research.

Concerning the first research question, “What accounts for people’s strong emotional connection to the NFL team in their city?” the Dallas group’s discussion focused on participants’ connections with the Cowboys based on the history of the team and their winning records. They all fondly remembered the “Glory Days” when the Cowboys dominated the sport. Since this was close to a decade ago, history and winning records appear to have a lot to do with connections between citizens and their sports teams. This ties in with Aristotle’s 350 B.C. theory of pathos, an emotional connection with a message. Since the Cowboys have not had a winning record in many years, there appears to be an emotional connection that keeps the fans connected and loyal to the team.

Unlike the Dallas group, the Houston group had a more varied and overt response to what creates an emotional connection with a particular sports team. **Allie** said, “People love to cheer for their hometowns,” so it appears geography has a lot to do with one’s emotional connection with a team. However, not everyone in Houston is a fan of the Texans. For example, **Brad** and **Aaron** seemed to believe that a connection with a sports team is formed when people live out their sports’ fantasies vicariously through players in a particular sport. On a related note, **Lauren** commented, “...people played sports when they were young and it [watching sports] often brings back memories from childhood.” This link to childhood ties in with family influence on which team a person has loyalty toward. Since fans are connected to teams and players through their own fantasies, this finding also ties in with the idea of pathos and an emotional, instead of logical, connection with a team (Aristotle, 1954).

When asked the second research question, “What are the most important benefits the city itself and the residents of the city receive from the presence of the NFL team in their city?” the Dallas group all responded with pride and bragging rights. For example, **Danielle** commented, “Even now, it’s like, at least the Cowboys are better than the Texans.” The whole group, including **Alex** who did not consider himself a fan, felt that the Cowboys were a sense of pride for the city. Furthermore, Dallas focus group participants all believed the Cowboys were known worldwide and had a strong reputation. **Kristen** commented, “When I go someplace...they always ask me if I go to Cowboys games or if I like the Cowboys. Even in different countries...that’s what

everyone associates Dallas with.” The benefits the citizens of Dallas focused on were all emotional, which falls under Aristotle’s 350 B.C. theory of pathos.

When originally asked what benefits citizens of Houston receive from the Texans being a part of their city, everyone answered – nothing. However, after some prodding, the group discussed the economic growth that is seen in the downtown area, as well as the economic growth of the businesses that sell products related to the team. For example, in **Lauren’s** follow-up interview, she mentioned that “[the Texans] have revitalized the downtown area.” Most of the participants commented that the downtown is now a nice place and that they feel much safer now that it has been reestablished. The Houston group’s perceived benefits are more economical and logical than those of the Cowboys. These benefits back up Aristotle’s 350 B.C. theory of logos and argument logic because they are logical benefits, instead of personal, emotional benefits.

One thing the Houston group all agreed on was that they do not feel pride by having the Texans in their city. In fact, it was brought up that they felt more pride toward their other sports teams, such as the Rockets and the Astros. **Tanner** commented, “Most cities get pride out of their sports teams...Say if the Texans started winning games...the city would have something to be proud about...” The benefits that the Houston group focused on were all economical, and, in fact, they felt they received no emotional benefits from the team.

Researching the third question, “When making decisions concerning the team, such as acquiring a tax to pay for a new team or to build a new stadium, what do people base their decisions on?,” turned out to be more difficult to gather from the participants

then some of the other questions. Concerning decisions of fan loyalty, most of the participants in both groups said that their families had the strongest influence on their team loyalty. They said the media strengthened their opinions of the teams, but did not help build these opinions.

Regarding decisions on how much financial support to give the team, the participants seemed to rely on their own “gut” feelings, which were a resounding, “no” in both focus groups. Most of the participants said that the players and the team already make too much money, and they did not feel like they personally should have to contribute money to support a team; however, they all thought new stadiums were necessary for the teams and that the loss of the team would be devastating for the city. This redundancy in answers is worth noting given the variance of fan loyalty between the two cities. The high level of fan loyalty in Dallas would lead you to assume that they would be more willing to assist financially if need be; however, Dallas fans were even less willing to help finance a team than the Houston group, who were not found to have as much fan loyalty.

When trying to classify the logic of their decision-making process in regards to financial assistance for a sports team, both groups appeared to rely solely on their emotions. Although both groups talked about the economic benefits the city received and the detriment that would occur if the team were to move, nearly all participants said they would not assist the team. The participants were using Aristotle’s 350 B.C. theory of pathos in making their decisions and relying on their emotional connection to the message, instead of thinking through logical arguments.

After conducting this study, it has become obvious that there are differences between the two cities and their loyalty to their teams. Residents of Dallas, TX seem to be more loyal to their NFL team, the Cowboys, than residents of Houston, TX are with the Texans. Dallas residents display strong passion and convictions about their team, even when they only consider themselves mild fans, while Houston residents seem to have a negative position regarding their team and their team's future. In looking at the differences in emotional connection to their teams, there appears to be a link between residents' views of the city they live in and their NFL team. Dallas residents seemed very proud of their city and had nothing but positive views of their city and football team, as compared to Houston residents who only discussed the negatives about their city and team. Future research would need to be conducted to determine if there is a relationship between the viewpoints on the city and the team in the city. A possible way to do this would be to study other cities that have NFL teams to see if this trend persists.

Another reason for the difference in emotional connections to their team seems to be the length of time the team has been in the city. Several times in both focus groups the words "tradition," "history," and "established" were mentioned in conjunction with the Dallas Cowboys. On the other hand, the Texans were constantly compared to the Cowboys for lack of the above words. Since the Cowboys' fans are more connected to their team, this shows a strong emotional tie to the team's history, which would validate the theory of pathos (Aristotle, 1954).

Community support was a big part of the Houston focus group as it was mentioned six times throughout the discussion. **Derek** mentioned that the Oilers "created

a nostalgia with the city and a vibe with the community” that was lacking with the Texans. Everyone seemed in agreement that the best way to garner community support for a team was to increase their visibility in the community, so as to gain the emotional connection with the community. Since involvement in the community ranks high with the Houston focus group, it can be said that they are looking for an emotional connection with a sports team. When applying Aristotle’s 350 B.C. theory of pathos, it appears that it is more important for a team to have an emotional connection with their city than just a purely logical connection.

Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation of this study is the homogeneity of the study participants. While the focus groups were a good mix of genders, they were all people from the same age group, economic background, and ethnicity. This can be viewed as an advantage due to the similarity of views and the enhancement of redundancy in the focus groups and follow up interviews; however, this did not allow for much variance or addition of differing opinions or additional themes.

While redundancy was achieved through this method, the findings cannot be applied to all people of the same age group who did not participate in this study. Further, all the participants in the study were Caucasian; therefore, this study does not take into account differing opinions that may be found within different ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, all of the participants were of middle class socio-economic backgrounds; hence, they do not represent the opinions of the upper class or lower class. They were

also all recent graduates from Texas Tech University, which is perceived as a more conservative university by other university systems. Differences in opinions may be found by researching students from other Texas universities. Expanding the diversity of the focus groups in all the above areas would be useful for future research.

Since this is one of the first studies done in this area, there are many variations that can be done to enhance future research. One such study would be to compare the differing opinions in age groups. During both focus groups, participants mentioned that they felt that people in older age groups would be responding to the questions differently than themselves, and that they might have stronger ties to the team because they have lived in the area longer. Also brought up in the Dallas focus group was the idea that older age groups would be more interested in assisting financially than younger age groups. It would be interesting to look into this discussion of financial assistance with participants from different generations to see if there really is a split in how much they would be willing to pay for a new stadium.

Also, breaking the focus groups up based on the level of fandom would be interesting. I categorized the participants into different fan levels based on their media consumption of the team and their own identification; however, I was unable to use this as much as I would have liked due to the fact that the fan levels were unequally represented among the focus groups. Looking at the different responses to these questions through differing fan levels would give more insight into their emotional connections to their teams.

The focus groups also briefly touched upon the role of the mass media in building fan loyalty and support, or non-support, for the teams. Both focus groups commented on the role the media plays in the reputation of the teams. This area of study deserves more focus in future research. For instance, how does the media affect a person's level of fandom? And does it affect people differently? Another area of research would be to use content analysis to review a sports newscast to see how if the teams are indeed portrayed in a positive or negative light.

This study showed the strong emotional connections between study participants and the sports teams in their cities; however, strong team loyalty is not necessarily linked to financial support of a team. This study also demonstrated the strength of Aristotle's 350 B.C. theory of pathos among younger generation sports fans. All in all, loyalty to a team appears to be closely connected to the strength of their emotional connection with the team, which includes history, winning records, and tradition.

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APPENDIX A

DALLAS FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Ben is 25 and has lived in Texas for 19 years and lived in Dallas for the same amount of time. He is considered a **strong** Cowboy fan, answering every question in the top percentage as well as ranking himself a 10 on a 10 point scale. He also was a part of a follow-up interview.

Lindsey is 24 and has lived in Texas for 21 years and 15 years in Dallas. She considers herself a fan, but only ranked herself a 5 on a 10 point scale. She is viewed as a **minimal** fan for this study.

Kristen is 23 and has lived in Dallas, Texas for all 23 years of her life. She ranked herself a 7 on a 10 point scale to determine fandom and is viewed as a **mild** fan. She participated in a follow up interview.

Carol is 24 and has lived in Texas for 21 years and Dallas for 15. She considers herself a 6 on a scale of 10 when looking at how strong of a Cowboys fan she is. For our study, she is a **mild** fan.

Danielle is 23 and has lived in Dallas for 13 years, the same amount of time she has lived in the state of Texas. She does not consider herself a big fan, ranking herself a 4 on a 10 point scale. She is seen as a **minimal** fan. Danielle also took part in a follow up interview.

Alex is 22 and has lived in Dallas, Texas for 9 years. He moved here from Canada and has a different national perspective than the others in the group. He does not consider himself a Cowboys fan, ranking himself a 1 on a scale of 10. He is considered a **non fan**.

Eric is 26 and has lived in Texas for 9 years of his life and Dallas for 5 of them. He ranks himself a 5 on a 10 point scale making him a **minimal** fan. Eric also was a part of the follow-up interviews.

APPENDIX B

HOUSTON FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Chris is a 23 years old and has lived in Texas for 9 years and Houston for 2. He is considered a **minimal** fan because he has ranked himself a fan of 5 on a 10 point scale.

Kevin is 24 and has lived in Texas for 12 years and Houston for 7 of them. He described himself as a 6 on a scale of 10 which would put him in the mild fan category; however, since all of his other answers put him as a **minimal** fan, he is located in that category.

Derek is 27 and has lived in Texas all of his life, but in Houston for 17 years. Derek has marked himself as a 6 on a 10 point scale, classifying him as a **mild** fan.

Jennifer is 28 and has lived in Texas all of her life; however, she has only lived in Houston for 2 of them. Although on the fan scale, she only rated herself a 2, her answers to the other questions place her in the **minimal** category.

Tanner is 23 and has lived in Texas all of his life and Houston for 5 years. He does not consider himself a Texans fan at all, ranking himself a 1 on the 10 point scale. Therefore, I have classified him as a **non fan**.

Allie is 23 and has lived in Texas all her life and Houston for 18 of those years. She ranks herself a 2 on the 10 point scale and does not consider herself a fan. For this study, I have classified her as a **non fan**. Allie also took part in the follow up interview.

Aaron is 23 and has lived in Texas for 11 years and Houston for 6 years. He does not consider himself a fan of the Texans, ranking a 1 on the scale of 10. He is considered a **non fan** and took part in the follow up interview.

Lauren is 22 and has lived in Houston, Texas for 16 years. She ranks herself a 1 on the 10 point fan scale and claims to not be a fan. She is therefore categorized as a **non fan**. Lauren took part in the follow up interview.

Brad is 24 and has lived in Houston for 15 of the 18 years he has lived in Texas. Fanwise, he considers himself a 6 out of 10 for the Texans. He is placed in the **mild** fan category and was a part of the follow up interview process.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

We are asking you to be a member of a focus group for a research project called “A comparison of the logical and emotional impacts on the citizens of Houston and Dallas in regards to their NFL teams.” Jennifer Miller is the principal investigator for this study and can be reached at 742-4538. Dr. Amanda Hall Gallagher of the College of Mass Communications at Texas Tech University is the faculty member overseeing this study and can be reached at 742-3385. The purpose of this research paper is to learn about the logical and emotional connections citizens of a particular city have with the NFL team located in their city.

If you agree to be a part of this research, you will be asked to read and sign this form acknowledging your participation in this study. Afterwards, you will be asked to fill out a 7-question survey before taking part in the focus group. This survey will ask questions regarding the extent to which you are a fan of a particular sports team. It is preferable if all of the questions are answered; however, if there is a question that you would prefer not to answer, it is okay to skip it. After the survey is completed, you will take part in a 45-60 minute focus group that will cover topics of fans’ connections and opinions of their sports teams.

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. You might find there are some questions that you do not want to answer, and that is okay. There will be no harm to you in answering or not answering any of the questions.

The benefits of this study include a free lunch, as well as the knowledge that will come from the completion of this study. You are more than welcome to ask for a copy of the results of the study at its conclusion.

If you decide to be a participant in this study, your confidentiality will be maintained at all times during the research. You will be assigned a pseudonym for use in the write-up of this research paper and all information with your name on it will be kept in a locked drawer or password protected computer.

Doing these surveys is completely up to you. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty. You are free to not respond to any questions that you choose not to answer without penalty.

Dr. Gallagher will answer any questions you have about the research study. For questions about your rights as a subject or about injuries caused by this research, contact the Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office of Research Services, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409. Or you can call 806-742-3884.

If you sign this sheet, it means that you have read this form and that all of your questions have been answered.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX D
FOCUS GROUP SURVEY

How many Cowboys home games do you typically attend each year?

0 1-2 3-5 6-8 9-10

How many Cowboys games do you watch on TV?

0 1-2 3-5 6-8 9-12 13-16 17-20

How often do you talk about the Cowboys with your friends or family?

Once a month Once a week Once a day More than once a day

How often do you read news articles on the Cowboys?

Once a month Once a week Once a day More than once a day

On a scale of 1-10, how big of a Cowboys fan are you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If the Cowboys were looking at moving to another city, how much money would you be willing to pay each year to keep them in Dallas? _____

If the Cowboys were not approved for their new stadium, how much money would you be willing to pay each year to assist them in their efforts for a new stadium? _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Years you've lived in Texas: _____

Years you've lived in Dallas: _____

APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR GUIDE

Introduction:

Hello. I would like to thank you all for coming today to this focus group discussion for my thesis. My name is Jennifer Miller and I will be moderating our discussion.

As most of you know, this discussion will be about sports teams, specifically the Dallas Cowboys and Houston Texans. I would like to discuss your opinions concerning the team and the importance you believe they may or may not have on the community. I'm interested in hearing any and all opinions and beliefs, so please speak openly and honestly. There are no right answers. I'm just looking for your personal opinions.

Guidelines:

Here are a few guidelines for this focus group. This is a relaxed and informal discussion. Please feel free to help yourselves to pizza and drinks. This session is being videotaped and cassette taped so please allow one person to speak at a time. Your comments are entirely confidential. Your names will be changed in the write up of my thesis, so please feel free to speak openly. This discussion should last about an hour or so. Are there any questions so far? If not, let's get started.

I'd like to go around the room and introduce ourselves. Tell us your name, where you are from, and how long you have lived there.

Questions:

What is your perception of Dallas' national reputation?

What activities are talked about most by people not from Dallas?

Which activities bring people to Dallas?

How important are sporting events to making you feel proud to be a resident?

What is your general opinion of the Dallas Cowboys?

Do you consider yourself a fan?

Why do you as a fan feel so strongly about them?

Why do you think the Cowboys have a nickname of being "America's Team"?

Why do people feel an emotional connection with them?

Why do people stay loyal to them even when they are having a losing season?

What do you think people base their opinions of the Cowboys on?

The media – newspaper, ESPN, TV

Other people

Their fandom

How important are the Cowboys to the city of Dallas?

How much would it hurt their image as a major city if they moved?

Would the loss of the Cowboys hurt the reputation of the community?

What kind of benefits do you receive by having the Cowboys play in your city?

What kind of connection do you have with them?

How important are the Cowboys to making you feel proud to be a citizen?

What do you think would happen if the Cowboys were to leave?

How would the quality of life change if they left?

How much would you be willing to pay each year to keep them around?

What is your opinion of the new stadium?

If the vote had not passed, how much would you be willing to pay to build a new stadium for them?

What is your opinion of the Houston Texans? They are from your state and yet are not from your city?

Where do you prioritize them?

Are there any comments you would like to make concerning the Dallas Cowboys or fan's opinions of them?

Conclusion:

I want to thank each of you for participating in this discussion today. The information you have given is of great value to my thesis, and I really appreciate it. The information from this focus group will be used in the results of my thesis which will be available for you to look at if you are interested at the end of the semester. Does anybody have any questions before we conclude this discussion?

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello! This is Jennifer Miller with Texas Tech University. I'm calling you for a couple of follow-up questions to the focus group you attended last week. I received some great information from the group and was hoping to clarify some of the questions and themes brought up last week.

Please feel free to speak openly and honestly. Your name will be changed in the research write-up, so nobody but myself will know who you are. Are you ready to get started?

Questions:

How do you view the media's impact on the popularity of the Cowboys/Texans?
Do you think it has helped them or hurt them? How?

What do the Dallas Cowboys/Houston Texans mean to the city of Dallas/Houston?
What direct benefits do you believe you receive from the NFL team in your city?
How would you personally feel if the Cowboys/Texans were to leave the city?

If the Cowboys/Texans were looking at moving to another city, how much money would you personally be willing to pay each year to keep them in Dallas/Houston?

\$0 \$0.01-\$4.99 \$5-14.99 \$15-\$24.99 \$25-49.99 \$50-74.99 \$75 +

If the Cowboys/Texans had not been approved for a new stadium, how much money would you personally have been willing to pay to assist them in their efforts?

\$0 \$0.01-\$4.99 \$5-14.99 \$15-\$24.99 \$25-49.99 \$50-74.99 \$75 +

What would determine how much you would be willing to pay to help the team?

How much does a team's winning or losing record have to do with fans' loyalty to the team?

Dallas Specific Question:

Why are the Cowboys considered America's team?

Houston Specific Question:

Were you more of a fan of the Oilers or the Texans? Why?

Are you more of a fan of the Cowboys or the Texans? Why?

What do you think the Texans could do to increase fan loyalty?

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____Jennifer Miller_____
Student Signature

__April 23, 2006__
Date

Disagree (Permission is not granted.)

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Date