**Embryo Case**

**Summary Sheet**

**Working title of the case:** The Tangibles vs the Intangibles

**Author(s):** Eko Y. Liao, Amy Y. Wang

**Source of case data:** Secondary Research

**Expected level:** Undergraduate

**Industry setting:** All industries

**Main character, job title:** Derek Dorsett, Retired Hockey Player

**Relevant theory to be applied:**

**Envisioned case issues (for the Teaching Note):** see synopsis

**Questions/issues I’d like help with:**

Which theories are most applicable in this context?

How do I incorporate appropriate theories into the case?

**Synopsis of the case as you currently envision it: (Attach no more than one page)**

**Embryo Case:** The Tangibles vs the Intangibles

Eko Y. Liao, Amy Y. Wang

In the National Hockey League (NHL), there is a huge debate about whether there is a place for fighting among players on the ice. A hockey fight involves two players dropping their gloves and throwing punches at each other on the ice. Advocates against fighting argue that not only can it be dangerous, but hockey is about which team can score more goals. In order to do so, you need the most skilled players to maximize your chances of scoring on the other team. Advocates against fighting rely on tangible evidence – advanced statistical data – to determine who the coach should play.

Advocates for fighting, on the other hand argue that fighting provided *intangible* benefits. Tough guys – players who are good at fighting but less skilled at hockey – can spark and motivate their team by fighting the opposing player. Additionally, by having an “enforcer”, the other team players are less likely to play dirty for fear of retribution. Advocates for fighting rely on “the eye test” to determine who should play on the ice. As fighting is not directly related to scoring goals, “the eye test” looks for the unmeasurable factors (i.e. increased energy and emotion of team) that may indirectly lead to goal scoring.

The importance of this debate revolves around the fact that only a certain amount of players can play at one time. So the question is, who do you choose to deploy and how do choose your players? Should a manager or coach base their human resource management decision on hard data or human intuition?

This case will outline the pros and cons of using statistical data versus using human intuition in decision making situations. The purpose of this case is to stimulate students’ thinking and encourage a lively debate regarding the importance of both intangible and intangible based thinking.

Through this real life phenomenon, here are some issues that can be addressed:

1. How can managers balance statistical data with human intuition in their management of people?
2. Can the value of organizations and its people be measured through intangible factors/tangible factors? How?
3. What is the role of advanced statistical data in processes that are traditionally based on human intuition?
4. How can artificial intelligence affect the human resources management process?
5. Which type of jobs are suited for “tangibles” based decision making? Which types of jobs are suited for “intangibles” based decision making?
6. What are the tangibles of employees/organizations? What are the intangibles of employees/organizations? How important are they?