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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Lauren Melanie Osmer entitled "“Learning the Hard Way”: An Examination of Acculturative Support for Latin-American Baseball Players in the South Atlantic League." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Recreation and Sport Management.

Sylvia T. Trendafilova, Major Professor

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“Learning the Hard Way”: An Examination of Acculturative Support for Latin-American Baseball Players in the South Atlantic League

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

Lauren Melanie Osmer
August 2011

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Abstract

Latin-Americans have become major contributors in Major League Baseball, but face many challenges acculturating to living and playing in the United States. This research examined the acculturative support provided to Latin-American players by teams in the South Atlantic League of Minor League Baseball and whether or not people involved think that support was effective. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with front-office members and Latin-American former players, and transcriptions were analyzed for emerging themes using QDA Miner content analysis software. Three main themes emerged from the interviews: the language barrier, interaction between Latin-American and Anglo-American teammates, and the youth of Latin-American prospects. These themes were identified both as presenting the biggest challenges to the acculturation of players and also areas where assistance should be focused in order to be of the most benefit. All interview subjects believed the support currently provided for Latin-American players was effective, but that there are still areas where improvements can be made. Future research should explore acculturation from current players' perspectives, instead of taking a front-office approach, and would not only provide information on the player's opinions of current acculturative practices, but also their attitudes and beliefs about acculturation and whether they view it as a positive or negative experience.

Key Words: *Latin-American, Latino, Baseball, Acculturation, Experiences, Thematic Analysis, South Atlantic League*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Ser un emigrante/ese es mi deporte/Hoy me voy pal' norte
(Being an immigrant/that's my sport/today I go north)-Calle 13

While many view sports as a separate entity from the cultural makeup of a society, the truth is that sports are social constructions, "parts of the social world that are created by people as they interact with one another under particular social, political, and economic conditions" (Coakley, 2009, p. 12). Because of this, sports function as a microcosm of our society; they often reflect the attitudes, values, triumphs, and challenges of the dominant culture surrounding them. Therefore, as the United States becomes more diverse, it is no surprise that participants in sport are becoming more diverse as well. One area in which diversity has become a central issue is within the realm of professional baseball, where on Opening Day of the 2010 season, 28.3% of the players on major league rosters were classified as Latino, with the majority of those being foreign-born (Lapchick, Kaiser, Caudy, & Wang, 2010).

An increase in diversity has many positive benefits, but can also provide challenges as two or more divergent groups of people must learn to interact and adjust to one another while still remaining comfortable and productive. Just as many employers in the United States are now addressing issues raised by the entrance of Latin-American workers into the economic and professional spheres of daily life, Major League Baseball is also dealing with the benefits and challenges of incorporating a diverse group of international players into the structure of professional baseball. The passion for baseball in Latin-America has led to an influx of Latino talent into the minor and major leagues, but along with the on-field skills of the players come challenges of adapting to life and

work in an unfamiliar environment, with different language, food, and social customs. These players face the additional test of having to adjust and adapt to an entirely new cultural environment while trying to prove themselves athletically capable on the baseball field.

These challenges have historically led to Latin-American players being subject to racist opinions and stereotypes about their on and off-field performance. These stereotypes are by no means new; terms like “lazy,” “flashy,” and “hot-tempered” have been applied to Latin-American players since they first began to play in the major leagues (Wendel, 2003). Much of the blatant racism and stereotyping faded as the color barrier was broken and racial relations in the United States began to improve, yet even now these labels follow many current Latin-American players. The names of some of the best Latin-American players and biggest stars in the majors can be found with these labels attached to them (an internet search for terms such as “bad attitude”, “arrogant”, and “flashy” brought up names such as Hanley Ramirez, Rafael Soriano, Jose Reyes, Carlos Zambrano, Manny Ramirez, Luis Castillo, Jose Bautista, and more). While at the major-league level, many players simply play with these labels or overcome them through superior statistical performance, these labels can often affect a players’ standing within his team or occasionally the trajectory of his career; two high-profile player transactions occurred during the 2010 season (Yunel Escobar being traded from the Atlanta Braves to the Toronto Blue Jays and Manny Ramirez being put on waivers by the Los Angeles Dodgers) that along with performance specifically cited the player’s “attitude,” “makeup,” and “personality” (Anderson, 2010; Bowman, 2010; Martino, 2010) .

However, simply accepting these stereotypes as fact fails to take into account the cultural factors behind the actions of these players. Culture is an internalized aspect of our personalities; most of our actions are driven by the cultural norms and standards we are most familiar with (Sknolnikoff & Engvall, 2010). Therefore, challenges that Latin-American players experience with acculturating to life in the United States can be misread or misinterpreted by outside observers who lack an in-depth understanding of the cultures and societies these players come from. For many years, teams bringing Latin-American players to the United States did nothing to assist them in the challenges they faced of adapting to a new culture. This adaptation is better known as acculturation, defined as, "those phenomena, which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). Acculturation "requires unlearning many old cultural habits (deculturation) and learning new ways of responding from the host culture. Immigrants must simultaneously adapt their own native culture and adopt the host culture by learning new attitudes, language, values, and customs" (Amason, Allen, & Holmes, 1999, p. 312). However, having thorough and beneficial programs in place to help Latin-American players acculturate as smoothly as possible is becoming more of a priority for teams throughout professional baseball. These "acculturative support" programs can range from English instruction to guided trips and outings to 'way-of-life' classes about everyday living in the United States; essentially, anything teams do to introduce international players to the United States and help them adapt both on and off the field.

Purpose of the Study

This research will use QDA Miner software to look for themes emerging from interviews with players and front-office staff; this will allow the researcher to examine the methods of support teams provide to Latin-American baseball players to aid in their acculturation, and interviewees' opinions on whether or not those methods are effective. In particular, this study will focus on the lower levels of the minor leagues, which are often the first playing destinations for Latin-American players upon arriving in the United States. It is hoped that examining the methods of support provided for players can identify ways not only in which teams are successfully assisting players, but also ways in which improvements can be made in order to make these acculturation programs of greater benefit to Latin-American players. This should increase the players' own comfort level within the United States and should benefit the teams by providing them with more well-adapted players, as the benefits of successful cultural diversity can make an organization more productive (Amason *et al.*, 1999; Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Ogbonna & Harris, 2006). Additionally, the research will broaden the literature on not only Latin-American athletes but also on acculturation of international players in sport.

Significance of the Study

As the global community becomes more interconnected, successful companies and organizations look outside their previous boundaries in order to diversify talent and increase productivity; Major League Baseball is no exception. Baseball talent has expanded beyond U.S. borders and has become a global commodity, and since the early 20th century teams have been recruiting and signing players from Latin America and

bringing them to the United States. A number of these players go on to contribute to major league clubs and make successful careers playing professionally in the U.S. However, many more, far beyond the majority, do not succeed and are released at the lower levels of the system. “According to statistics kept by major league baseball, between 90 and 95 percent of foreign-born players are released at the minor-league level” (Breton & Villegas, 1999, p.47); another source working in the Dominican Republic explained “Only three percent of the ballplayers we sign make it to the big leagues. The other 97 percent fail…” (Klein, 1991, p.72). Upon seeing the struggles of many of these players, teams began to provide assistance in dealing with the language barrier and other cultural adjustments, but as the above examples show, even current players can still have difficulty successfully acculturating both in and out of the baseball environment.

There is a tendency to say that the most successful players will overcome the challenges of acculturation no matter what the outside circumstances are; people often point to the success of former and current Latin-American stars such as Roberto Clemente, Felipe Alou, Sammy Sosa, and David Ortiz to show that talent on the field can outweigh any other obstacles. However, successful and beneficial acculturation programs could lead to more Latin-American superstars and All-Star level talents, who otherwise may fail to progress beyond the lowest levels of the minor-league system due to communication barriers, homesickness, or an inability to cope with racism and stereotypes.

Since sport reflects society, and since changes in sport can serve to effect social change and vice versa (one only needs to remember the effect Jackie Robinson’s arrival

in the major leagues had on bringing race relations to the forefront of the American consciousness), the diversity brought to baseball by the inclusion and acceptance of Latin-American players can become a factor in "challenging racial ideology and transforming ethnic relations," not only within sport, but within the American society at large (Coakley, 2009, p. 313). Successful incorporation of diversity within sport also creates the opportunity to "borrow and blend different sports, styles of play and game strategies…envision[ing] and create[ing] sports that fit a wide range of interests and abilities" (Coakley, 2009, p. 563).

A major justification for this study involves the effect that successful acculturative support can have on international athletes. Providing cultural assistance to players has two-way benefits; effective support can serve as an advantage for both player and organization. Supported players may feel more comfortable, leading to better performance, better relationships with others, and more self-confidence and self-efficacy (Amason *et al*., 1999; Mamman, 1995; Oerlemans & Peeters, 2010; Ogbonna & Harris, 2006). Organizations in turn may produce players with better on-field results, more visibility with the media and fans, and overall better productivity on their teams, which could potentially lead to postseason success and increased revenue (Amason *et al.*, 1999; Jamail, 2008). Teams can also increase their standing with international players, as these players may be more likely to sign with teams who have good reputations related to their treatment of Latin-American players (Marcano & Fidler, 2002). By helping these players acculturate, and thus retaining them within the professional ranks, teams will have a greater talent base to draw from and more opportunity to make use of the athletic talents of a successful player.

In respect to contributing to the literature, there has been little research done in the area of Latin-Americans acculturating to participation within U.S. sport. Most of the studies based on Latin-American athletes, especially in baseball, have been historical in nature or have focused primarily on salary or position data. Therefore, this study will provide an additional perspective on the acculturative support, or lack thereof, for Latin-American athletes.

Organization of the Study

In order for organizations to understand what changes, if any, need to be made to make their acculturation programs more effective, first a history of Latin-American acculturation in sport and a survey of the current support programs and their effectiveness must be presented to provide background information and a place to build from. Also examined in Chapter Two will be human resource management literature to review general support methods for acculturating international workers. Chapter Three will review methodology and describe the design of the study. Chapter Four will provide results from the interview transcripts and thematic analysis, and Chapter Five will provide discussion of the results, implications of findings, and researcher recommendations, as well as suggestions for future and expanded research.

Operational Definitions

Latin-American/Latino/Latin: "The term used by people from Latin-America to identify themselves as a single population with shared political interests and concerns. It was created as an alternative to *Hispanic*, a term used by the U.S. Census Bureau to refer to people of any race who have 'Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin.' I use Latino because it is

more socially and politically meaningful than *Hispanic*, which is mostly a demographic term" (Coakley, 2009, p. 298).

Anglo-American: A person from, "a region in the Americas in which English is a main language…" (Micropædia, 1990). "Usage Note: In contemporary American usage, Anglo is used primarily in direct contrast to Hispanic or Latino. In this context it is not limited to persons of English or even British descent, but can be generally applied to any non-Hispanic white person, making mother tongue (in this case English) the primary factor" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2008).

Stereotype: "A social process in which people are assigned attributes solely on the basis of their group identity (Tajifel, 1969)… stereotypes can take the form of positive as well as negative attributes, or both" (Mamman, 1995, p. 538).

Bias: "A particular tendency or inclination, especially one that prevents unprejudiced consideration of a question" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2011).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will offer a review of literature examining the challenges faced by Latin-American baseball players and the acculturative support provided to these players both historically and in modern times. It will also review literature on human resource management ideas and techniques in helping international workers adapt to and be successful in a new working environment, and will also examine the acculturation of international workers specifically within a sports setting. Finally, the themes present within the literature will help to define the research questions specific to this study.

Historical Acculturation of Latin-American Players

The first Latin-American players entered professional baseball in the United States around the turn of the 20th century, in the early years of the major leagues. The majority of these players came from Cuba and were often some of the most dominant players of their era, including Adolfo Luque, Rafael Almeida, and Armando Marsans (Wilson, 2005). However, these early players faced many challenges adapting to the culture in the United States, mainly due to the language barrier. George Stallings, manager of the Boston Braves in 1913, remarked upon learning that the team had acquired two Cuban players, including Adolfo Luque, "What are you going to do with a bunch of birds that you have to talk to in sign language?" (Wilson, 2005, p. 70). Occasionally players had some help in dealing with these challenges; Alejandro "Alex" Pompez, a Negro League team owner and later a scout for the Giants organization, was known to help Giants signees adjust to life playing in the United States. "'He was asked

to acclimate and supervise the Latin players during spring training,' said [Fausto] Miranda" (Wilson, 2005, p. 119). Pompez's responsibilities included acting, "as a cultural translator, a U.S. Latino who understood the cultural backgrounds from which these players came and could interpret U.S. social norms and cultural practices for them" (Burgos Jr., 2007, p. 202). "Baseball's greatest pinch-hitter, Manny Mota, declared, 'Alex was like a father to all of us. He took us under his wing and he prepared us to face baseball in the United States. He prepared us on what to expect in a different country and a different culture. And we appreciated what he did for us.'" (Wilson, 2005, p. 119).

However, dealing with the challenges of acculturation and stereotypes of the press was something that only the "lucky" players who made it to the major leagues faced; for many more players, the dream of playing at the highest level in the United States was impossible due to the color barrier that existed until the signing of Jackie Robinson in 1945. Martin Dihigo, arguably one of the greatest baseball players in history and the only player to be elected to the Hall of Fame in five different countries (Cuba, Mexico, the United States, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic), never played for a major league team, spending his playing career in the Negro League, Cuban League, and Mexican League and also playing in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico (Wilson, 2005).

Perhaps no one dealt with the adjustment to playing baseball in the United States in a more public way than Roberto Clemente in the 1960's and 1970's. Often seen as the first great Latin-American baseball superstar, Clemente was a fifteen-time All-Star selection in the outfield, a 12-time Gold Glove winner, and two-time World Series champion with the Pittsburgh Pirates (Maraniss, 2006, p. 383). This status gave him an excess of media attention and highlighted the difficulties of acculturation faced by

foreign-born baseball players. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Clemente knew little English when he arrived in the U.S. to begin playing professionally (Maraniss, 2006). Former player Nellie King described Clemente as being "in a cultural twilight zone." (NGS, 2002, p.102). However, the media had little sympathy for the additional challenges he faced. He was often quoted phonetically by sportswriters and labeled as temperamental and "hot-blooded" when he objected to this treatment (Wagenheim, 1973). This attitude was not only confined to Pittsburgh; Orlando Cepeda reported to Giants camp in 1962 to find a sign reading "Speak English, you're in America," and his manager Alvin Dark told the players to "stop speaking Spanish in the clubhouse" (Cockroft, 1996, p. 131).

The language barrier was not Clemente's only challenge; Latin-American players had long been subject to certain stereotypes about their performance as well. Many of these stemmed from a big league scout in the early 1900's describing Cuban players as "fast, snappy fielders, but they cant [sic] hit" (Wilson, 2005, p. 54). This "good field, no hit" image of Latin-American baseball players persisted in the minds of many, but Clemente, with 3000 regular-season hits, 240 home runs, and a lifetime batting average of over .300, proved the stereotype untrue (Maraniss, 2006, p. 383). Even his great numbers did not make him immune to criticism, however; one scouting report published prior to the World Series in 1960 stated, "Clemente features a Latin-American variety of showboating; 'Look at numero uno,' he seems to be saying" (Wagenheim, 1973, p. 77). Other publications referred to him as a "showboat" or "Puerto Rican hot dog" (Wagenheim, 1973, p. 77). Alvin Dark, the manager of the Giants, perhaps best summed

up some of the racist attitudes toward Latin-American players' (as well as African-American players') abilities when he told *Newsday*:

> We have trouble because we have so many Spanish-speaking and Negro players on our team. They are just not able to perform up to the white ball player when it comes to mental alertness…You can't make most Negro and Spanish players have the pride in their team that you can get from white players. And they just aren't as sharp mentally. They aren't able to adjust to situations because they don't have that kind of mental alertness (Cockroft, 1996, p. 130).

On top of these challenges, due to the color of his skin Clemente also had to deal with the racial tensions present in the United States. Integration had officially occurred in baseball in the 1946 season, but Jim Crow laws were still in effect throughout the U.S., especially in the South, where spring training was held and many minor-league franchises were located (Cockroft, 1996). Ruben Amaro, a dark-skinned Cuban player, considered leaving the game after arriving in the United States and encountering segregation, telling his father, "I do not want to play in the states because it's really too tough to live isolated. I cannot go to theatres, to public places, and use the same facilities as the other teammates." (Wilson, 2005, p. 140). Clemente himself eloquently summed up the many challenges he faced when speaking to Howard Cohn, a writer for *Sport* magazine:

> Latin American Negro ball players are treated today much like all negroes were treated in baseball in the early days of the broken color barrier. They are subjected to prejudices and stamped with generalizations. Because they speak Spanish among themselves, they are set off as a minority within a minority, and they bear the brunt of the sport's remaining racial prejudices…some players and managers lump together the Latin-American Negroes with a set of generalized charges as old as racial-religious prejudice itself. 'They're all lazy, look for the easy way, the shortcut,' is one charge. 'They have no guts,' is another. There are more (Wagenheim, 1973, p. 99).

At this point, teams mostly did not provide support to assist Latin-American players in making their cultural transition to the United States. Luis Mayoral, who eventually served as a cultural liaison for Latin-American players for multiple major-league teams, explained, "Remember it was only eight years after Robinson broke the color barrier… So, Roberto had his struggles. There was not, like me, a guy to…help the Anglos bridge with the Latinos. And remember he was alone. He was alone in a country he didn't know." (NGS, 2002, p. 101). For that, the players mostly had to rely on each other. Bobby Avila, a Latin-American player who joined the Cleveland Indians in 1948, was told to get a Spanish-English dictionary and was roomed with Mike Garcia, a Mexican-American pitcher who was bilingual and assisted Avila greatly during his time with the team (Regalado, 2008, p. 52). Some teams benefitted from having a large Latino presence in their area; while with the Giants, Pompez was able to place many of his players in homes of Latino families, "that exposed them to English, provided access to familiar cuisine and cultural life, and foster[ed] connections with Harlem's Latino community" (Burgos Jr., 2007, p. 134). This "chain" of assistance would continue on into the present for Latin-American players, and Clemente was a major proponent of this kind of support. Clemente often helped rookies, especially younger Latino players on the Pirates, adjust to life in the U.S. and within the clubhouse (Maraniss, 2006). Teammate Steve Blass wrote, "Roberto reacted more to rookies than to guys who had been around for a while, maybe because he would've liked someone to have helped him when he was a rookie." (NGS, 2002, p. 102). Even today, many Latin-American players make sure to help younger players coming through the system; Vladimir Guerrero said of Pedro Martinez, "He helped me with everything, telling me where to go, where not to go, where to eat, where

not to eat, everything," causing Martinez to respond, "He knows what I did with him…Now he has to do it with the younger ones who will come up" (Gutierrez, 1999, p. 4).

The Academy Era

Outside of help from other players and the occasional staff member in an organization, Latin-American players were mostly left to their own devices and given the responsibility to acculturate or not, with the organization likely to release them if they were unsuccessful at adapting to life in the United States. Things began to change, however, with the construction by major league teams of the first baseball academies in the Dominican Republic in the 1980's (Klein, 1991). The Toronto Blue Jays and Los Angeles Dodgers were the first to open academies, which essentially served as camps to isolate young players and focus their entire attention on baseball. Gradually, however, the academies also became sites at which Dominican players could be given help with the acculturation challenges they would face upon arriving to play in the U.S (Klein, 1991). Ralph Avila, formerly the Los Angeles Dodgers' vice president of Latin American player development, weighs in: "Before [the academies] a lot of players were signed in [the Dominican Republic], taken to the U.S. and released-nine, ten, maybe more in a day-because the kids weren't ready. That wasn't fair" (Klein, 2006, p. 98). While the focus at the academies was clearly on baseball, as time progressed more and more teams began to include acculturation aspects into their academy training, whether it was English classes, financial advice, or "way-of-life" instruction to prepare players for the transition to professional baseball (Klein, 1991). While the players still helped each other (as one prospect stated, "The new arrivals are taught by those who have been here. Like, I help

that new guy, the second baseman over there"), the academies began to see support being provided from the top-down, as part of a shift in organizational thinking (Klein, 1991, p. 78). As an example, prospects at the Astros' academy in 1990 had thrice-weekly English classes and bi-weekly cultural orientation sessions provided for them (Jamail, 2008, p. 59). Alan Klein's book *Sugarball: The American Game, The Dominican Dream* provides a comprehensive look at the Dominican academies through 1991, when it was published. He saw many of the services academies provided as improvements, but knew they did not alleviate the problems completely. The structure of the English classes was not always beneficial to the players, and with a priority placed on baseball activities, it was often not stressed enough to the players how important the English and acculturation skills would be upon their arrival in the U.S. (Klein, 1991). He also cited a lack of support once the prospects arrived in the United States, highlighting the lack of Spanish-speaking coaches or counselors, with a prospect saying, "In the minors they give you leaflets with words such as how to call the ball, how to say 'cutoff,' 'strike,' and outside stuff such as how to order in restaurants…but us Latinos always have a fear that we will put our foot in our mouth and everyone will laugh" (Klein, 1991, p. 93).

As time has passed, teams have incorporated more acculturation practices into their academies. Many clubs now have psychologists on staff to assist players along with coaches and English teachers; Francisco Ruiz, a psychologist who worked at the Astros' academy, said he covered, "cultural issues, legal matters in the United States, and family issues. I tell them how to act in hotels, what to expect in restaurants, and about STD's…I also talk about concentration in baseball" (Jamail, 2008, p. 167).

The Modern Era

The Language Barrier

As Milton Jamail says, “The preparation for players coming from Latin America today is light-years better than it was only thirty years ago” (2008, p. 163). However, this doesn’t mean that all the acculturation problems Latin-American players face have been erased. The language barrier can still provide significant problems for Latin-American players, especially ones who are rushed through the minor-league system or sign with a team that doesn’t place a priority on language training. While as Jamail says, “Most Latin players quickly learn English well enough to communicate on the field and to get something to eat after the game,” many of them still do not learn enough English to communicate effectively with the press or receive English-language endorsements off the field (Jamail, 2008, p. 164). Lack of English can also affect play on the field; Frank Robinson, who managed Vladimir Guerrero, said of coaching him, “I can’t teach him anything this way. I can’t help him with the mental part of the game-slumps, approach, state of mind. It’s awkward, frustrating. He would feel better, and I would feel better, if I could reach him, but I can’t. He’s on his own” (Wendel, 2003, p. 122). Many, if not most, major league teams now carry one staff member or coach who is bilingual and can help facilitate communication between players and coaches on the field, however most, if not all, teams do not provide a translator for the specific purpose of translating for Latin-American players (Burgos Jr., 2007). Ozzie Guillen, among others, has complained about this in recent years, especially when compared with Japanese players. While relatively few Japanese players play in the major leagues in the U.S., most of them have a personal

translator (Burgos Jr., 2007). “Latinos, the vast majority of whom are foreign-born, represent over a quarter of all big leaguers, yet most teams remain reticent about permanently employing a translator to assist Latino players” (Burgos Jr., 2007, p. 248). When the New York Yankees told Cuban pitcher Orlando Hernandez they would no longer pay for his translator, he offered to pay out of pocket but the team refused (Burgos Jr., 2007). This does not seem like a logical decision when communication skills are so important to success on and off the field. As former Astros GM Gerry Hunsicker explained, “We need to constantly remind ourselves that with all the Latin kids we can’t make the assumption that the language isn’t a problem and because you get a head nod that they understand what you say. We need to be communicating effectively with these kids, and if we aren’t, we take the steps to make sure we are. I don’t care what anybody says, the communication skills many times are neglected. There is a lot lost in the translation” (Jamail, 2008, p. 172).

Relationship with the Media

The language barrier can have effects on a player’s relationship with the media, with pitcher Pedro Martinez saying, “Nobody actually teaches you how to deal with the media” (Burgos Jr., 2007, p. 46). Latin-American players have often had a contentious relationship with the press:

> ‘I thought a lot of that was that they were misunderstood because [many] Latins were clannish, and they stuck to themselves. [Hence] they gave the impression to some that they were arrogant, or aloof, or they could care less,’ remembered Nick Peters. ‘I mean it’s a two-way street if you want to communicate. A person like Cepeda [for instance] was adored from the beginning and generally adored by the press.’ Their image as ‘hot tempered’ and ‘oversensitive’ however, soured relations with journalists and peers. Perceptions that stemmed from earlier eras to be sure, lurked in

> the minds of frustrated writers who simply cast Spanish-speaking players as 'moody' (Regalado, 2008, p. 136).

Many of the players who do not speak with the media do not do so out of disdain or 'sullenness'; rather, as Philadelphia Phillies player Alex Arias explains, "They don't want to be embarrassed…they don't want to look foolish" (Gutierrez, 1999, p. 2). Many also refuse to speak with media due to the perpetuation of stereotypes and racist imagery; George Vecsey said of newspaper reports about Fernando Valenzuela's introduction with the Dodgers in the late 1980's, " 'As long as reporters and editors permit phrases like 'Valenzuela had flicked aside the Houston Astros like so many flies on his plate of tortillas'…it is just as well that [he] does not read English…he might get the idea some North Americans carry around unpleasant stereotypes of Mexicans'" (Regalado, 2008, p. 185). Being unable to communicate with the English-speaking media in the U.S. prevents players from having their voices heard, and while there is a growing Spanish-language media contingent in the States (first becoming prominent with the rise of Valenzuela's popularity), the majority of American baseball coverage is still provided in English (Regalado, 2008). "While Latin players are not invisible, they are often inaudible. Because their English is not perfect, most reporters don't seek out Latin players for the ten-second soundbite or the good, crisp quote" (Jamail, 2008, p. 164). Another effect of the language barrier is in its effect of reducing possible endorsements or commercial opportunities for players; "the financial stakes involved can be significant. The player who adroitly handles the media and his public image positions himself well for endorsement deals. Those who do not are often ridiculed by the sporting press" (Burgos Jr. 2007, p. 46).

There have been a few research studies published involving Latin-American baseball players and the media. One of the most recent was published by King-White (2010) and involved analyzing the media coverage of Danny Almonte, a pitcher originally from the Dominican Republic who played on a New York team in the Little League World Series and was later found to have lied about his age. King-White found that as an immigrant athlete, Almonte's identity changed within the confines of his press coverage; when he was successful, he was claimed by the United States and seen as someone who had flawlessly assimilated into the dominant culture and was held up as an example of a 'good' immigrant. However, when he was found to have lied about his age, he immediately became 'other' and was seen as an outsider who had invaded a pure American sport like little league baseball (King-White, 2010). King-White found that, "Mediated discourse often places the blame on the individual sports star for his/her failure within a system that provides many 'opportunities' for success" (2010, p. 181). This mirrors the coverage of many Latin-American players (as well as other immigrant and minority athletes), who when committing an action seen as negative, on or off the field of play, are identified as 'other' where before they may have blended seamlessly with the dominant culture. Placing the failure on the athlete instead of considering his or her cultural background and the acculturation they may or may not have received is certainly an easy and convenient way of dealing with the issue, but may not fully address the underlying causes or influences on their behavior. This can apply to both on and off the field issues; it is like blaming a newly arrived international player for not speaking English when he may have never had any English classes, or blaming a player for not

knowing how to execute a sacrifice bunt when he has never been asked to perform one before.

Another study by Juffer (2002) analyzed the media coverage of Sammy Sosa and the redefinition of the 'American Pastime' into being more inclusive of the international identities of many of its players. She found that coverage of Sosa remained positive even as he stayed tied to his Dominican identity because he fit the stereotype of the "good immigrant" held by many of the viewers; hardworking, unselfish, and gregarious. The coverage of him had American national identity, "destabalized but in a safe and limited fashion; there [was] no need to consider Latinos outside of baseball, either in Chicago or in the Dominican Republic" (Juffer, 2002, p. 354). Globalization of the sport was acknowledged by the media, but was still bound by a sense of American identity behind which viewers could retreat in order to feel more comfortable (Juffer, 2002). This 'sanitization' of the Latin-American player's identity, as well as the media glossing over the hardships Sosa faced and the statistics of how many Latin-American players do not succeed in the major leagues, shows that many media outlets are still not fully embracing the multicultural aspects of baseball and its players, leaving Latin-American players with a diminshed sense of personal identity, at least among national media coverage.

Stereotypes

Beyond the language barrier and other "physical" acculturation challenges such as food and living arrangements, many Latin-American players are still faced with stereotypes and embedded ideas about both their play and personality upon arriving in the United States. While blatant racism has been greatly reduced since the days of Robinson and Clemente, more subtle prejudices and misunderstandings are still commonplace

within the game. A lack of knowledge about players' individual backgrounds or a general lack of knowledge about Latin-American culture by coaches and executives in the United States can contribute greatly to cultural confusion and conflicts (Jamail, 2008).

One concept that Klein identifies is what he calls the "head case vs. head-of-the-class" phenomenon, where cultural misunderstandings between certain Latin-American players and management can lead to players being labeled as "head cases", while players who acculturate quickly and easy are seen as "heads-of-the-class", or the model of what organizations hope Latin-American players will become (Klein, 1991). As Klein describes it:

> One often hears the term "head case" applied to Latino players who fail or who do not reach their potential. The terms describes a player whose behavior is excessive, unpredictable, unconventional, and difficult for the organization to control…But people in baseball use the term "head case" too inclusively, and some are too willing to call a Latino player a head case simply because he is a product of a culture that is foreign to them (1991, p. 87).

This label, like any that implies a prospect will present a problem or challenges to an organization, can be incredibly damaging to a player's career, especially a young, un-established player. As Klein says, "A player who carries the stigma of the head case does not easily lose it" (1991, p. 93). Sometimes these labels are based on the style of play on the field, sometimes on acculturation problems players are experiencing off of the field (Klein, 1991). These labels can lead to players getting benched, traded, or essentially blacklisted from baseball as organizations will not want to take on a player labeled as a problem by other teams. Klein puts it starkly when he says, "An organization often sees less compliant behavior as sufficient grounds for being traded or for having one's movement through the organization held up. At best this is cultural insensitivity and

intolerance, at worst systematic persecution" (1991, p. 94). Classifying players this way based on cultural misunderstandings can lead to talent loss for major league teams and the end of a career for a young player. Klein (1991) also explains that Latin-American players are aware of the labeling system and often, "will go to extremes to avoid it," leading to players unwilling to ask for help, confess injuries, or show signs of anything they believe could be interpreted by teams as signs of weakness or difficulty (1991, p. 94). Miguel Tejada, upon arriving in the minor leagues in the U.S., said, "When I went to Medford I decided I wasn't going to be the kind of person who was always asking for help. When you do, the Americans speak badly of you. It's like you give them an excuse to criticize you and I wasn't going to do that" (Breton & Villegas, 1999, p. 147).

Another challenge facing Latin-American players is the stereotypes held about their style of play and the emotion they display within the game. Since the early 1900's, players have often been labeled as "showboats" or "hot-tempered Latinos" (Jamail, 2008, p. 193). However, as Skolnikoff and Engvall explain, "How people 'play' and participate in sport is culturally constructed…Even though the rules in baseball may be the same or very similar, how people interpret the rules and act on and move their bodies accordingly can be very different…A person's culture is embodied in every action" (Skolnikoff & Engvall, 2010, p. 175). A common phrase used by Latin-American players is, "*Este juego no es de nosotros. Es de ellos, del Americano*." 'It's not our game. It's theirs. It belongs to the Americans'" (Breton & Villegas, 1999, p. 102). Adrian Burgos Jr. continues, "Latinos entered the U.S. playing field with their own cultural practices and expectations about the place of baseball and community. The perceived arbitrariness of team rules and league policies developed into a regular topic of conversation among Latino ballplayers"

(2007, p. 212). While the game itself is the same, cultural mores and expectations lead to differing ideas about style of play and interpretations of player attitudes, responsibilities, and expectations. Burgos Jr. identifies many of the attitudes held about Latin-American style of play as representative of, "a larger pattern within U.S. sporting culture that has portrayed Latino cultural practices (style of playing baseball) and behaviors (approach to the game) as deficiencies that handicap their individual success and hamper their team's ability to succeed" (Burgos Jr., 2007, p. 258). Enrique Soto, Miguel Tejada's baseball coach from the Dominican Republic, explained, "Baseball in America…is not the game it is in the Dominican Republic. On the island, it's a game of instincts. But in America, it's a game of instructions" (Skolnikoff & Engvall, 2010, p. 179). Examples of this enculturation of the game leading to misinterpretations and misunderstandings are numerous, from press comments labeling players as "showboat" and "temperamental" to criticisms of the way Latin-American players conduct themselves on the field; as was said about Cuban star Minnie Minoso:

> Men like Minoso could laugh on the field and still be competitive in their hearts. They could play tricks Americans considered underhanded and still respect the rules. They could display their friendship with an opponent during a hard fought game. They could laugh in the dugout when a teammate struck out. They could talk back to their manager while still respecting authority. And they could accept a game-costing error and whistle while walking off the field. Most of all, they could play on a team while still defining themselves as individuals (Jamail, 2008, p. 119).

Breton and Villegas (1999) and Klein (1991), among others, explain some of the cultural factors that can partly lead to these interpretations. Klein describes the cultural traits of *machismo* and *personalismo* which can give Latin-American men, "an excessive swaggering and cockiness, and an excessive male pride that is easily slighted" (1991, p.

91). As a cultural trait not embedded in U.S. culture to the same extent that it is in Latin America, team executives, coaches, and press members can often misinterpret this and simply label a player with a generalized stereotype instead of trying to understand the cultural influences. Latin-American players facing challenges or failure in professional baseball, often for the first time, can easily fall into, "a cycle of self-blame and erratic, moody, sullen behavior that reinforces the poor performance… the combination of rapid career advancement, possibly weak ego development, *machismo,* and cultural dislocation…makes for a young player barely able to cope with success on the field, and virtually doomed when faced with setbacks off the field" (Klein, 1991, p. 92).

Attitudes of Management

Another challenge faced by Latin-American players can stem from the attitude team officials often take about players, characterized by Marcano and Fidler as the "Opportunity Thesis" (2002, p. 49). They define this attitude by explaining, "These people acknowledge that historically problems have existed, but that overall Major League Baseball offers children in Latin American countries opportunities they could never otherwise think possible" (Marcano & Fidler, 2002, p. 49). While Marcano and Fidler address this idea specifically in relation to the treatment of young prospects in Dominican and Venezuelan academies, it is an attitude which has existed for many years within baseball and appears to be held by many in relation to various aspects of treatment and acculturation of Latin-American players. Breton and Villegas address it in relation to a young prospect: "The American justification for the treatment of its newly arrived immigrants is familiar: Garcia would have been "lucky" to be here. What was his alternative, cutting sugar cane?" (Breton & Villegas, 1999, p. 115). Dick Balderson of the

Colorado Rockies said, “These (players) are getting opportunities they wouldn’t otherwise get” (Breton & Villegas, 1999, p. 48). Rene Gayo, the Cleveland Indians’ Director of International Scouting, explained, “These guys, if they don’t play in the big leagues they’re going to end up selling mangoes in the street for the equivalent of a quarter” (Marcano & Fidler, 2002, p. 49). As Breton and Villegas explain, “That rationale makes it seem that baseball teams are crusaders, providing a service to down-trodden, exploited Dominicans,” when the success of Latin-American players will often provide major benefits, financially and otherwise, to the teams that sign them (Breton & Villegas, 1999, p. 181). In many ways, some baseball executives simply look at players as disposable commodities; Andres Reiner, at the time head of International Scouting for the Houston Astros, explained that baseball is, “one industry among thousands. There is no difference between General Motors and the Houston Astros. One [product] is to be sold, like GM, and the other one is to be used in the major leagues. It is just like making Cadillacs” (Marcano & Fidler, 2002, p. 45). Obviously, viewing Latin-American players (or any players) in this way would not lead teams to provide adequate support for them; in this way they are seen as easily replaceable which would not motivate teams to provide the resources and spend the money to make sure they acculturate easily and successfully to playing in the United States. These attitudes are not overlooked by the players; many of them feel that, “their status is tenuous at best, and that the academies view them as entirely expendable commodities” (Skolnikoff & Engvall, 2010, p. 178).

Jamail (2008) summarizes the overall acculturation challenges that Latin-American prospects still currently face upon arriving in the United States through an

interview with former Houston Astros' General Manager Gerry Hunsicker. Hunsicker explained:

> To bury our heads in the sand and suggest that there aren't prejudices and stereotypes throughout our personalities is neglecting the problem, because there are. I just think sometimes there are implicit prejudices that people don't even realize. Prejudice is maybe too strong a word. They don't mean anything by it, but it's just there. Just because somebody talks different, acts different, their body language many times can get misread, and you start making assumptions about kids based on those kinds of things that turn out to be untrue, and you can ruin a kid's career that way (Jamail, 2008, p. 173).

After reviewing the historical background of the acculturation process Latin-American players have progressed through during their transition to playing professionally in the United States, it will be beneficial to review other literature that relates to the challenges they face in order to gain a broader understanding of the cultural and social forces influencing their position.

Acculturation and Diversity in the Workplace

As stated in the introduction, sports are cultural sites which often mirror events taking place within the greater cultural context of a society. In many ways, the transition that Latino players face upon signing with a major league team in the United States is similar to the transition that many Latino workers face upon coming to the U.S. to work in other industries. Regalado states, "The struggle to achieve recognition and parity in the major leagues was part of the larger Latin quest for equality in the United States. Indeed, the experiences of Latin players in the major leagues provided a unique perspective and often brought into clearer focus the larger Hispanic experience" (2008, p. 5). Studies on acculturation of international workers within the business environment caught on during the late 1980's, when diversity was rapidly becoming an issue at the forefront of the

professional world. While there is limited literature on the issue of acculturation within the sports setting, there are a fair number of studies on the acculturation of international and non-English-speaking workers outside of the sports realm.

Mamman (1995) examined how minority employees could effectively acculturate and adjust to the work environment in a multicultural organization. Citing a variety of former studies, he discusses how self-confidence is important for minority workers, as well as how exposure to a diverse workforce can have a positive effect on a company; "acquisition of knowledge of different cultures can improve intercultural effectiveness" (Mamman, 1995, p. 531). He also examines different levels of opposition to minority workers, identifying three main categories; stereotype, ethnocentrism, and prejudice. His examination of ethnocentrism in the workplace led him to conclude that higher levels of ethnocentrism in an organizational culture can lead to more difficult transitions for workers from other cultures, especially those who do not speak the primary language of the organization (Mamman, 1995). While much of this study is a synthesis of former literature, it does show that having players of different cultures interact with one another, especially in an environment that accepts and promotes the positive aspects of multiculturalism, can lead to a team or organization becoming more successful (Mamman, 1995).

Porter (1995) examined ways in which companies could best facilitate successful cultural diversity among their employees. His main argument was that while it was often left to the employee to acculturate his/herself into the organization, it should not be the responsibility of the employee, but should instead fall to the organization and management to ensure an easy transition process (Porter, 1995). Porter explains how a

lack of organizational support can lead to a failure to adapt for a new employee: “Left to neglect, members who fail to perceive the need to adjust their behavior and possibly their values to be consistent with the organization’s culture often find themselves in isolation and minimally performing stated job requirements” (Porter, 1995, p. 40). Stating that the only way for an organization to be competitive and successful is to adapt to a changing environment which includes diversity, Porter concludes that, “it is not appropriate in a competitive business environment for the organization to make it the primary responsibility of its members to independently perceive and assimilate into its culture,” (Porter, 1995, p. 40) and that it is the manager’s responsibility to help acculturation as part of a process designed to increase bonding and team-building skills among employees. This leads to questions about the ways in which baseball teams assimilated Latin-American players in the past, by essentially letting them fend for themselves in a new country and new environment. When acculturation is viewed under the realm of management, it would seem that teams have a responsibility to the players as employees to assist them in their cultural and professional transition to playing professional baseball in the United States. This responsibility, however, is often ignored:

> For its part, baseball management was interested only in fielding players who could contribute to victories. In doing so, however, it too often failed to recognize the burden Spanish-speaking employees carried. Left to form their own adaptation programs, many players chose to withdraw, often to avoid awkward and potentially embarrassing situations. And in some cases, the decision to conduct themselves solely in their language was viewed with suspicion (Regalado, 2008, p. 106).

Amason, Allen, and Holmes (1999) studied how perceptions of support received in the workplace differed between Anglo-American and Hispanic employees and how the support they did receive assisted in their acculturation. “Supportive intraorganizational

relationships have been linked to reduced uncertainty, increased job satisfaction and job security, increased satisfaction with supervisors and individual self-worth, decreased job stress and burnout, and increased worker health" (Amason *et al.*, 1999, p. 313). Based on surveys and interviews, the study found that Hispanic employees received support mainly from other Hispanic coworkers, while Anglo-American workers received less support from this source. The authors hypothesized that this was in part due to the common language, which meant that Hispanic workers mainly interacted with each other during the acculturation process, as, "attempts to bridge the communication gaps created by such diversity were minimal, increasing employee stress" (Amason *et al.*, 1999, p. 321). Hispanic workers who did receive support from American coworkers, however, reported having a much easier acculturation process. Hispanic employees also greatly valued praise from management, and the researchers found that support from coworkers and praise from management both helped to reduce the stress associated with the challenges of acculturation (Amason *et al.*, 1999). The study shows the beneficial effects of support not only from management (although that support is in some ways more important) but also from coworkers or teammates, which can have an immensely positive affect on reducing stress associated with acculturation, which in turn can increase productivity and satisfaction of international workers or players. Positive interactions with other players can also give Latin-American players a sense of ownership and pride in the team, a important factor when, "on the field, a lack of ownership of the game is the essence of the Latin experience, and has its roots in how baseball was brought to Latin America and how Latin players were treated once they got here" (Breton & Villegas, 1999, p. 102).

Ogbonna and Harris (2006) studied employee relationships and dynamics in an ethnically diverse workforce. Upon discovering tensions between native and immigrant workers, interviews revealed that, "perceived or actual differences in language and communication between the groups are likely to increase the likelihood of tension and group dysfunctions" (Ogbonna & Harris, 2006, p. 383; Swann *et al*., 2004). The main finding of their study highlighted that the language barrier was the biggest contributor to negative workplace dynamics, and was the main way in which workers defined themselves (i.e., English-speaking or non-English-speaking) as opposed to more traditional measures (age, race, gender, etc). "Language also became an important element in the definition of ingroups and outgroups, with outgroups especially targeted for resentment and criticism" (Ogbonna & Harris, 2006, p. 393). Rather than supporting its workers, the organization tended to blame them for not being able to learn the language and adapt quickly and efficiently on their own, and the relationships between workers and between workers and management suffered as a result, with informants, "freely admit[ing] to discriminating against those that they perceive to have difficulties communicating in English" (Ogbonna & Harris, 2006, p. 400). Similarly to Porter (1995), this study draws the conclusion that support from management can greatly aid the acculturation process, and highlights the immense effect that a language barrier can have on communication between employees and management (Ogbonna & Harris, 2006).

Oerlemans and Peeters (2010) studied acculturation orientations within the workplace and how differing cultural orientations affected performance and work dynamics among employees. They found that members of the host society tend to want immigrant workers to completely assimilate into the host culture, while immigrants prefer

to have a dual-orientation that allows them to partially assimilate but also maintain some aspects of their original culture as well (Oerlemans & Peeters, 2010). They found that, "acculturation is more likely an interactive process between immigrant groups and the host community groups in a society," where the attitudes and efforts of the host culture can have a great impact on the acculturation of members of the immigrant group, belying the notion that acculturation is a one-way process that is the sole responsibility of the incoming worker (Oerlemans & Peeters, 2010, p. 461). Disagreements between the host culture and immigrant workers about how much or how best to adapt to the new culture led to less positive intergroup relations which could have an effect on production and satisfaction in the workplace. A main point of the study was to show that intergroup interaction and contact could greatly benefit worker relations, as stereotypes and prejudices have less chance of being formed or adhered to with exposure to a diverse group of people (Oerlemans & Peeters, 2010). In baseball, this could mean that interaction between Latin-American and Anglo-American players could lead to a more positive team experience and better results on the field of play. There are a variety of ways in which managers and executives could facilitate this, some of which will be proposed in the interviews in the following chapters.

Acculturation and Diversity within the Sports Setting

More studies have begun to be conducted on diversity within the sports setting. There are a limited number, however, which provide relevant information to the focus of this research. Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) provide an excellent overview of the theoretical perspectives available on managing diversity within sport organizations. Ensuring the success of cultural diversity within an organization can help make an

organization more productive and successful (Fine, 1995). They also stress that the approach to managing diversity, and not having diversity itself, can determine what makes a sports organization successful. Citing Loden and Rosener (1991), they explain that minority members of an organization "can feel alienated and discriminated against when their unique cultural symbols are not tolerated. They are less likely to be effective and succeed when the attitudes and behaviors that are expected and rewarded are different and even contradictory to their own," (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999, p. 285) which can help explain some of the acculturation difficulties Latin-American players experience when faced with differing expectations or unexplained responsibilities. They define a successfully culturally diverse organization as one in which, "it is acknowledged that individuals bring their personal cultures to the workplace, and those differences are capitalized on to the benefit of the individual, the group, and the organization," (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999, p. 289) and explain, "The benefits of cultural diversity can be realized when the culture of the organization values diversity, whereas the negative aspects are realized when the organization values similarity" (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999, p. 293). In baseball, acts of unique ability and individual skill are valued on the field of play; the heart-stopping defensive play or show of strength at the plate is part of what makes baseball an exciting sport to watch. By valuing uniqueness and individuality culturally as well as athletically, major league teams can reap the benefits of having a multicultural team environment.

Fink, Pastore and Riemer (2001) examined the management of diversity at a Division I-A collegiate athletic department. After determining that having top-down support for a multicultural workplace was essential, the researchers examined the steps

taken to attempt to increase multiculturalism among the department. They found that athletic director's support for managing diversity was higher than expected, but that the traditional identity of an athletic environment (one which promotes members of teams acting cooperatively toward a common goal and minimizing individual accomplishments) made implementing diversity programs more difficult (Fink *et al.*, 2001). They did, however, re-emphasize the importance of leader and executive support for these programs, saying, "While a leader cannot 'dictate' that all members share in the beliefs of the benefits of diversity, they can set up the policies, procedures, and practices necessary for such beliefs to be fostered" (Fink *et al.*, 2001, p. 40). They also confirmed that different strategies of diversity and multicultural management did lead to different organizational outcomes, suggesting that altering from a traditional organizational culture could have effects on the production and success of a department (Fink *et al.*, 2001). This reaffirms the need for executive and managerial support for a multicultural environment on teams, but also highlights the challenges faced in taking advantage of diversity in athletic environments where the individual is less valued than the team as a collective.

In one of the very few studies specific to baseball, Smart and Wolfe (2003) examined the effect of leadership and human resources on on-field performance in Major League Baseball, using the Resource Based View (RBV) theory to apply their findings to see if teams gained a significant competitive advantage. Their study found that 68% of variations in success were attributable to player performance (i.e. measurable offensive and defensive statistics). While they didn't find any success could be specifically attributable to leadership and human resources, 32% of the team success was left unexplained, leading the authors to conclude:

> We are not convinced that it is not 'leadership' that accounts for much of that 32%. RBV research has indicated that it is 'such resources as knowledge, learning, culture, teamwork, and human capital…that (are) most likely to be sources of sustained competitive advantage' (Barney, 2001, p. 45). If the leader is an important contributor to learning, culture, and teamwork, and it is those intangible resources that are the source of sustained competitive advantage (Smart and Wolfe, 2000)-then leadership matters (Smart & Wolfe, 2003, p. 182).

While leadership and human resources are not specifically defined, the unexplained variance leads to factors other than team performance contributing, and it could be argued that organizational support for players could fall under this category. If that is the case, then on-field performance could be directly affected by the support teams do or do not provide to their players, meaning a team with the organizational systems in place to better support its Latin-American players could see substantial dividends on the field as opposed to teams that lack those resources.

Research Questions

Alan Klein states, "A ballplayer is three things: an individual, a member of a socioeconomic group, and a member of a cultural group. Most baseball clubs see the ballplayer only as the first of these and reward and punish him accordingly" (1991, p. 90). The review of literature above shows that taking all three facets of a player's background into consideration may help clubs assist their Latin-American players in the acculturation process and give them a greater understanding of how to produce a more effective player. While acculturation assistance for Latin-American baseball players has improved greatly since the early years of their participation in Major League Baseball, many players still face challenges today when they arrive to play professionally in the

United States. The human resources and diversity literature shows the importance of having positive acculturation experiences for workers and highlighted the challenges international workers face in having to adapt to a new working environment. The sports-specific studies also highlighted an increased awareness of diversity and multicultural issues, but also showed that many sport organizations are still struggling with how to best assist members in adapting successfully. Taking all of this into account, this research study was conceived with three research questions in mind:

RQ1: What acculturation support methods do baseball teams currently provide for their Latin-American players?

RQ2: Is the support that teams currently provide beneficial to their Latin-American players?

RQ3: What support methods are still missing that could provide beneficial support to Latin-American players?

Chapter 3: Method

Sample

Because, "early in an employee's tenure is the most effective time to deal with issues related to acculturative stress as well as to influence new employee's perceptions of the organization's culture regarding prejudice and discrimination," (Amason *et al.*, 1999, p. 327), the South Atlantic League was chosen as the sample group for this study, as it is a Low-A league in the Minor League Baseball system and one of the first places that Latin American prospects will play upon reaching the United States. The sample for this study was made up of front-office members, both of South Atlantic League teams and aligned with Major League Baseball franchises that formerly had teams in the South Atlantic League, and Latin-American former minor-league players. For the purposes of this study, "front-office members" refers to administrative personnel as opposed to players and coaches; the front-office members interviewed for this study included General Managers, Clubhouse Managers, Minor-League Operations Assistants and Directors, and a Director of Player Personnel. Final sample totals were seven front-office members and two former players, who are now coaches with major league teams. Front-office participants were selected for this study by contacting all general managers of South Atlantic League teams. Additional front-office and player participants were selected by using convenience sampling. Berg and Latin define convenience sampling as, "subjects possessing the necessary trait or traits [who] are readily available" (Berg & Latin, 2008, p. 80). All participants were proficient in English, though both former

players (one from Venezuela and one from Puerto Rico) spoke Spanish as their first language.

Procedure

A qualitative approach was chosen as the best research method for this particular study. Qualitative research allows for a more subjective study with an examination of outside influences instead of simply categorizing strict data. Qualitative researchers believe, "multiple-constructed realities abound, that time and context-free generalizations are neither desirable nor possible, that research is value-bound…and that knower and known cannot be separated because the subjective knower is the only source of reality" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.14). Because this study must take into account opinions and personal feelings as well as numerical data, qualitative methods seem to be most appropriate for the philosophical idea and research questions involved in this study. In other words, "Using qualitative methods will…offer a more in-depth viewpoint of the subject matter as opposed to quantitative methods, which may only attempt to explain a portion of any given phenomenon" (Norwood, 2010, p. 78).

Within the framework of qualitative work, interviews were selected as the most appropriate research method, based on the content of the research questions. As Patton, explains, "We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe" (Patton, 2002, p. 340). Because the research questions for this study required in-depth descriptions and personal opinions, a survey, for example, would not have provided enough information; "The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341).

Subject anonymity and confidentiality were very important to the validity of this study. IRB (Institutional Research Board) approval from the University of Tennessee was sought and given prior to the beginning of the study (IRB Application Forms can be found in Appendix D). Informed consent forms were signed by participants prior to conducting the interviews, and all data pertaining to the identities of the subjects was destroyed or recoded for anonymity. Interviews were conducted over the phone or in person and were recorded to ensure reliability upon transcription. Interviews generally lasted from ten to twenty-five minutes. The questions came from a list that had been formulated prior to the interview and were generated from the original research questions; both front-office and former player interviews had twelve questions formulated in a semi-structured manner to allow for the most honest and informative responses (Interview questions are contained in Appendices B and C). Upon completion of the interviews, transcription of the audio recordings was completed by the researcher, and the audio files were then deleted for protection of confidentiality. For the purposes of quoting transcriptions within this study, participants were assigned a pseudonym of the letters A-I to ensure anonymity.

Data Analysis

The data from the front-office and former player interviews were then subject to analysis using a content analysis software. Content analysis is defined as, “the method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables” (Wimmer & Dominick, 199, p. 112). In other words, it allows the researcher to examine data and look for trends or patterns present; therefore, it was well-suited for the research questions and design of this

research. The data were then coded using Qualitative Data Analysis software (QDA Miner). This software was chosen over other options because of its ease with coding large amounts of data and user-friendly categorization and results. The Constant Comparison method was used to aid in the coding of data, which was based off of the interview transcriptions to ensure anonymity. This method of coding is used to, "group answers to common questions [and] analyze different perspectives on central issues. The method has four distinct stages: comparing incidents applicable to each category, integrating categories and their 31 properties, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory" (Coleman, Dye, Rosenberg, & Schatz, 2000, p. 1). Themes in the data were traced and coded in accordance with the original research questions for this study. Front-office members and former players were subdivided into "position" variables (i.e., "player" or "front-office") in order to distinguish responses given by the two groups.

Positionality

My own personal history, opinions, and experiences informed my role as a researcher in this study. Biases are inevitable in academic research, and are addressed by Atkinson, Jackson, Sibley and Washbourne (2005), saying, "academic and other knowledges are always *situated*, always produced by *positioned* actors working in/between all kinds of locations, working up/on/through all kinds of relations(hips)" (p. 16). As a white female researcher from the southern United States, I bring inherent biases to the research garnered from my racial and socio-economic upbringing. As this area of research is also a topic of interest to me, I bring personal beliefs about equity and fairness of access relevant to the particular people and situations studied in this research. That said, as a researcher I took certain steps to ensure that my involvement in the study

remained as unbiased and objective as possible. Interview questions were specifically designed not to be leading or allow personal research bias to influence responses. A concentrated effort was made to listen to all responses and allow interview subjects full range of discussion topics without drawing conclusions. Transcriptions were also directly transcribed without any additions or other notes being made on their content.

Chapter 4: Results

After transcribing and coding the interview data, three main themes were identified within the interviews: 1) The Language Barrier, 2) Interaction with Teammates, and 3) Youth of Prospects. The identification of these themes was based on similarities within the interview transcripts, as well as commonalities identified within the literature on the acculturation of Latin-American players.

The Language Barrier

By far the most referenced topic when discussing acculturation of the Latin-American players was the challenges they faced due to the language barrier. Six of the seven front-office interviewees and both of the former players stressed that the language barrier was the biggest challenge faced by players attempting to acculturate. Interview subjects also identified a variety of different ways in which dealing with the language barrier could affect players. A recurring theme was how it affected on-field performance; one front-office member said:

> I don't believe a player will reach his full potential until he has a solid grasp of the English language, because we're in the United States, the instruction is in English…if you don't speak the same language as your teammates it's not going to be as easy to communicate and play together (Participant G).

Another said, "They [Latin-American players] don't really know what's going on, especially when they don't have translators around all the time" (Participant C). The difficulties of instructions getting lost in translation were especially noted when it came to coaching and instruction more than in-game situations. As one interviewee explained:

> They'll be in meetings on the field and off the field with our coaching staff and front office sometimes, and they'll be told…either instruction on the

> field or certain details of life off the field, and you ask them if they understood and they'll nod their head yes when in reality they've got no clue what was just said and what's going to happen…they're going to try and find one of those veteran guys and be like 'Hey, what the heck just got told to us?' So overcoming that language barrier to the point where they're really receiving the instruction that they should be is sometimes difficult for them (Participant A).

Both former players also noted how much more difficult their transition was by not knowing English, which was compounded if there were no others on their teams who spoke Spanish. One of the former players said that when he first began playing in the States, he was the only player on his team who spoke Spanish. "I think then if they had had better classes I would have been doing better on the field…because you're not afraid to communicate, you're not afraid to do a lot of things; I was afraid to communicate because my language wasn't that good" (Participant H). The other former player explained, "When somebody's trying to teach you something it was hard for me to understand what they were trying to say, if they don't show it to me it was very hard for me to understand it, so yes, in a way we had to go a little slower than the American guys" (Participant I).

This leads to observations about available translators; four of the front-office members said that they either most of the time or always had a Spanish-speaking coach on staff. When no coaches were available, players tended to rely on bilingual staff members, or more often, other players with a better command of English to translate for them. One front-office member said, "Last year we got lucky, we just had one Latin-American player that was fluent in English so he could translate for them" (Participant C). This same organization had nothing formal in terms of translation assistance, with the interviewee confirming that there was, "nothing formal…it's just use the other players as

go-betweens." This theme was carried throughout the interviews, with one front-office member stressing, "When you find a player that's bilingual that's *unbelievably* beneficial for the clubhouse and the locker room environment" (Participant E). Both former players also mentioned using other players as translators, with Participant I explaining:

> I came from Puerto Rico…the only help that I had during those times was if I had a chance to play with a Latin player who speaks English, he would translate everything for me…they were real nice to do it because not everybody is willing to share or help you out, but anything that was going on on the field, in meetings, I had no clue what they were talking about.

No teams mentioned providing a translator specifically for that purpose, although one front-office member did suggest it as a way to improve the acculturation experience for the Latin-American players: "I think a translator would be great…usually for the Latin-Americans they just find another player that can do it, and it's kind of hard. I mean, the barrier, it really…it *really* exists" (Participant C). The same front-office member and one of the former players also brought up the fact that translators are often provided for Japanese players and are not provided for Latin-American players, although both mentioned it in passing and did not go into great detail on the subject.

In terms of English classes offered, all seven front-office members indicated that they did provide some form of English-language instruction, although the regularity and quantity of it varied greatly. Some teams had very structured programs, such as "for the most part we try to have our classes daily when the team's at home…so at the most they're going to get 70 classes a year from April 5th until September 1st" (Participant G). Other organizations were less structured, with one front-office member commenting, "It's kind of…it started really late last year and it gets cancelled a lot. Not regular" (Participant C). Interviewees also brought up the variation in organizational philosophies when it

came to the English classes, with one saying, “Some teams, they come through…the guys have to do Rosetta Stone to learn English, it’s really big…some teams that come in, the players have to do it on the bus…and some teams, they just don’t say anything at all” (Participant C).

Another aspect of the language barrier that interviewees addressed was the media/endorsement angle. Two out of the seven front-office members indicated that their team had some aspect of media training for their Latin-American players, with one other member stating that the team planned on implementing media training soon, but as another subject put it, “first they need to get a handle on the language before they get into dealing with our media” (Participant D). One front-office member brought up endorsements as a reason for learning English that should be stressed to prospects:

> The fact of the matter is, you are in the United States and you don’t see any TV commercials when the guys are speaking in Spanish…my point is, speaking English for them is way more than just the media aspect of it…They’ve got to understand that a guy like Albert Pujols, who’s one of the best players in the big leagues, he doesn’t have many endorsements because he’s not a good speaker, whereas Ryan Howard who isn’t as good as Pujols, has Subway, has Entourage, he’s on all over the place…it’s for them to kind of get the full grasp of, hey, we’re not teaching you so you can talk to a TV camera, because I don’t think that registers to them; I think if you were saying, hey if you learn more about this you’ll get money, you’ll get endorsements [that would register] (Participant F).

Interaction with Teammates

Another much-referenced topic among the interviews was the interaction between Latin-American and Anglo-American players. Four front-office members and one of the former players brought up the interactions between players as a positive and as something that should be encouraged by the organizations. As one front-office member explained, “Especially for the college and high school guys who were just drafted last year…the vast

majority of them if not all of them have never been on the same team as a Latin-American guy, so it's a big change for all of them" (Participant F). Certain organizations made sure that the players had an understanding of each others' cultures and interacted with each other often. For example, one interviewee said, "we'll show movies that show the history of Dominican baseball players to help give the Latin players a sense of pride and understanding of where they come from…and also give the American guys an understanding of what their journey is to baseball here in the United States" (Participant A). A member of an organization that didn't provide any structured interaction suggested it as a way to improve: "I think it would be beneficial to require them [Latin-American players] to live with an American, to make the cultural [reality] and all those things be seen for both parties, that would be huge" (Participant B).

Two organizations also had programs to give Spanish instruction to Anglo-American players, with one explaining, "During spring training we have our first year American players, players we had just drafted the year before attend Spanish classes" (Participant A). A front-office member of an organization that didn't provide this service said it would be, "very beneficial for the American guys to learn Spanish as a second language" (Participant F). The motivation behind offering Spanish classes and other forms of interaction between the players from different cultural groups was verbalized by one interviewee as a way, "to kind of break apart the cliques that exist in the clubhouse where the Latin guys go to one side and the American guys go to the other side and you have this divide, we try and get rid of that divide and help them be more comfortable with one another" (Participant A). Another front-office member suggested that reducing the cultural divide between players would help improve performance, saying, "I really think

the team would play better because then when you're playing as one team instead of semi-divided, oh, you know, the Latin guys, the American guys, this and that, I think it'd be pretty cool to see that" (Participant F).

Youth of Prospects

Three of the front-office members and one of the former players also brought up the age of Latin-American prospects as a factor. One front-office member cited the fact that, as Latin-American players are not subject to the major league amateur draft and can therefore be signed at a younger age, signing these players younger may give them somewhat of an advantage over the U.S. born players: "They typically get a jump on American kids because they can start a little bit younger in the system where…American kids are still in high school some of these guys are in places in Latin America…where they're already getting some of that experience" (Participant E). Most interview subjects, however, cited the young age of the players as an additional challenge in terms of acculturation. One front-office member repeated, "They're young, they're very young…and then they have to face the best competition they've ever faced" (Participant D). Homesickness and adjusting to life without the support of their families was another familiar theme. A few front-office members spoke about how the young age of prospects during scouting and signing may contribute to the difference in the attrition rate between Latin-American and Anglo-American prospects, in addition to the acculturation aspects:

> We can get those kids at 16 and with that you're projecting out further, and the longer out the projection the more inaccurate it's going to be. The closer they are to full development physically and full development baseball-wise you're more likely to get the player right, but when you're looking at 16 year old kids who aren't even physically developed yet…or aren't emotionally developed, because there's a mental component to the game beyond the physical part, there's a makeup and a mental mindset that has to be developed also, and at 16 who's ready for that? (Participant D).

This sentiment was echoed by another front-office member when discussing scouting players at younger ages. He also addressed the emotional component along with the physical aspects, saying, "They're not developed bodies, you have no idea what their character is like or what their upbringing and background is, so I think it just poses a very difficult and big challenge for scouts to pick the guys who are going to make it and going to progress into both good baseball players but also…[good] adults" (Participant F).

One of the former players touched on the fact that signing Latin-American players at a younger age means they are less likely to have a strong educational background, which could make it harder for them to acculturate to life in the United States. He specifically referenced Dominican players, saying:

> The Dominican kids don't have too much education, not a lot of them today that can help them at all, because education[al access] is bad for them in the Dominican, but you sign a kid that's 17, 16 years old, what kind of education is he going to have, so the education, he's going to have to learn it from me as a coach, or a manager, or from the older players when he gets here (Participant H).

A front-office member also brought up education as a boon for Latin-American players, saying one thing he wished was possible was helping players continue their education. However, due to time constraints, he said it wasn't always feasible:

> You get them over here and the baseball time commitment is so great that they don't go to a traditional school, and when you find time you've got to get them the English classes, when do you find time to just educate them in other ways other than just the language? And that's the challenge… you always hope that there's ways to help them in other ways, and education would be one of them, but it's just hard to find the time to do it (Participant D).

Another front-office member also stressed the maturation rate of younger prospects, saying that their age can work as a disadvantage to their acculturation if organizations are not willing to give the players time to adjust and mature. This can lead to Latin-American prospects getting released from organizations before they really have the chance to show their skills on the baseball field, depending on how patient an organization is willing to be:

> I think that changes from organization to organization, you know, the way an organization views and values its Latin players and how much of an opportunity that organization gives those guys, how much they understand that a Latin player is going to mature at a little bit slower rate, that he really doesn't get his feet set in the ground until the end of year two and maybe year three, and getting that player a chance to get to that point…other organizations have a quicker trigger on those guys and want results sooner, and if they don't get it they'll let a guy slide (Participant A).

Rushing prospects through an organization can also hurt their acculturation process, as a front-office member pointed out, using the example of one of their recently signed Latin-American players:

> We've got one kid…who's kind of on an accelerated program…he's on the fast track so we've really pounded him with English classes, but culturally is he going to get the same benefit as the player that comes here and works his way through, gradually getting exposed to culture? He may not have that, so you hope he can catch up, but sometimes the baseball's faster than the culture, and he's up there and he's not really prepared for everything that's involved…From a baseball standpoint he's ready but from other standpoints he may stumble, he may make a mistake (Participant D).

Related Findings

While the three themes discussed above were the most prevalent, there were other findings that still have a bearing on the research questions for this study. All of the front-office members and former players interviewed said that they believed that Latin-American players did face more challenges, from a variety of sources, than players who were born and raised in the United States. All the respondents also said they believed that the support they currently offer to help Latin-American players acculturate is beneficial, although many of them had suggestions for improvements that could be made or other ideas that could be considered in order to be even more helpful to the players. One front-office respondent explained:

> Our front office really wants to go out of their way in understanding who these players are, what their experience is, what they can do to help them further in reaching their potential, a) in helping them as people, but also kind of in turn helping them become better players which benefits us, of course" (Participant A).

Both former players also stressed how much improved the acculturative support is for players currently as opposed to when they were in the minor leagues during the 1980's and 1990's. No organizations made any differentiation between Latin-American players from different countries in their acculturation programs, and no organizations provided assistance for Latin-American players after they were released beyond the generally accepted league policies. Responses were mixed when respondents were asked if the social views and stereotypes of media and fans could affect players on the field; most front office members said no, with two saying they could not answer without

generalizing. One of the former players said that stereotypes and bias did affect him on the field, while the other said he never experienced anything noticeable. However, and perhaps most relevant to this research, both former players said that the acculturative support they received, or lack of support, affected their play on the field at some level.

While the three themes identified were explored individually, there is also the possibility of connections or interplay between them. Both the Youth of the Latin-American prospects and the Language barrier challenges could affect the interaction these players have with their teammates. While these interrelations are mostly seen through inference, it seems relevant to mention that the themes could potentially interact with each other.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the programs of support provided for Latin-American players at the Low-A level of Minor League Baseball and to determine whether those programs were effective. In the analysis of the interviews conducted, three main themes were identified, leading us to examine how these themes and responses answer the research questions.

Research Question 1: What acculturation methods do teams provide for their Latin-American players?

The themes illustrated that interview respondents felt that English language instruction was by far the most important method of acculturation provided. While a few other examples were given of other types of support (e.g., financial assistance, help finding apartments, cultural assimilation classes, sex education, and organized outings during spring training), the majority of the focus was on English classes and support specifically for the language instruction. This seems to be in line with much of the historical and modern literature emphasizing the need for a common language as the first step towards successfully acculturating (Burgos Jr., 2007; Jamail, 2008). These results are also similar to much of the human resource management literature emphasizing the importance of language for acculturating workers. As Masteralexis and McDonald found, "Language fluency creates a smoother transition into working and living…encourages more effective communication, and provides stronger interpersonal relationships with and greater respect from…people in the foreign locale" (1997, p. 101).

Amason and colleagues also cited how the language barrier can be the main reason for assistance not being effective for international workers, saying, “Language and cultural differences may limit the sources from which employees seek or receive support” (1999, p. 314). Ogbonna and Harris (2006) also extensively discussed the role of language in a diverse work environment, saying it was cited as the biggest cause of conflict and, “became the focal issue through which individual employees defined their similarity to others” (p. 393). By allowing language to divide players and define in-groups and out-groups among them, it is easy to extrapolate the effect this could have on performance in a baseball setting (Ogbonna & Harris, 2006). While all the interview respondents identified English as the biggest factor in acculturation of Latin-American players, it was interesting to note the variation in precedence that English language instruction took between organizations. While some organizations provided very structured English programs for their other players, other organizations took a more casual approach and did not provide constant classes or stress the importance in other ways to their players. With the language being seen as a stepping stone to the rest, and the comments front-office members made about the language affecting on-field performance and teammate interaction, it is interesting to note these discrepancies. If, as Syed and Murray note, “the English language plays a major role in social interaction and networking in the workplace and may have implications for career progression,” it would seem that placing a priority on English language instruction for Latin-American players would lead organizations to have better retention rates and allow prospects a better opportunity to advance through the minor-league system (2009, p. 422).

The aspect of media training and media communication was also an important one; while few organizations offered media training, the literature has documented the past problems Latin-American players have faced with the media due to a lack of communication and stereotypes. Ogbonna and Harris (2006) found that, "informants freely admitted to discriminating against those that they perceive to have difficulties communicating in English," (p. 400) and Syed and Murray (2009) found that, "Some participants noted that sometimes their English proficiency (or lack thereof) was used by their colleagues…to rouse certain social stereotypes" (p. 422). Understanding that the lack of communication can lead to these misunderstandings, it would seem that in addition to English classes, specific training in interacting with the English-speaking media would be very beneficial for organizations. Since, "there is a higher degree of anxiety associated with interactions with people who are unfamiliar than with people who are familiar with each other," any program to acculturate Latin-American prospects and the American media to each other could only be beneficial, and could lead to increased understanding and ease of communication between them (Mamman, 1995, p. 530).

Research Question 2: Is the support currently provided beneficial?

All respondents answered in the affirmative when asked if the support they currently provide is beneficial. From a historical perspective, the advances made in acculturative support throughout the 20th century have been extremely beneficial. Early players like Luque and Almeida had virtually no support, while players following the eradication of the color line began to have limited support, but nothing substantial. The advent of the academies and increase in the number of Latin-American players encouraged organizations to begin taking the steps to provide cultural support for their

players to aid in their transitions. When judging the transitional experience of a player like Clemente against a modern-day prospect like Felix Hernandez, there is almost no comparison. Both former players interviewed repeatedly stressed how much better the support had become since they were players in the minor-leagues, which was less than 20 years ago. However, drastic improvements do not mean that all the problems of acculturation have been solved; current cases of players like Escobar and Ramirez show that cultural factors can still play a role in the careers of modern-day players. The acculturative support provided to Latin-American prospects is certainly beneficial, especially when compared to what has been done for them in the past, but are there other things organizations could do to improve the transition for these players? This leads to the third research question.

Research Question 3: What other support methods could prove beneficial that are not being provided?

Suggestions of additional support methods varied throughout the interviews, but as stated in the results, ran along the three main themes identified; improving the language courses, acclimating the Latin-American and Anglo-American players to one another, and dealing with the youth of the Latin-American prospects. The language concerns were discussed above, but the topic of acclimating prospects on a diverse team was a common one. A few organizations had certain activities to bring players together, including two that had Spanish instruction for Anglo-American players, but the literature highlights the importance of these types of programs. Mamman (1995) discusses this through the frame of Contact Theory, which, “centers on the premise that negative attitudes toward strangers are mainly caused by misunderstanding and/or misinformation

as a result of isolation. The more people get in contact with each other, the more they understand each other; then this leads to gradual acceptance of the differences between people" (p. 540). Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) also discussed the performance benefits for diverse groups of workers who are exposed to and become acclimated to each other:

> Intergroup contact reduced feelings of prejudice and led to more consensual intergroup relations… intergroup contact reduces feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and threat on how to approach and communicate with immigrant groups (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006)…As intergroup contact is generally low for host community members, an increase in intergroup contact would reduce feelings of anxiety and threat towards immigrant workers, and result in better intergroup work-relations (Oerlemans & Peeters, 2010, p. 472).

Amason and colleagues (1999) also found a large number of benefits associated with positive coworker relations, lending more support to acculturative programs meant to build relationships between Latin-American and Anglo-American players. Among their findings were the fact that, "Supportive intra-organizational relationships have been linked to reduced uncertainty, increased job satisfaction and job security, increased satisfaction with supervisors and individual self-worth, decreased job stress and burnout, and increased worker health" (p. 320), as well as that "Hispanics who received more support from Anglo-American coworkers indicated fewer problems loosening their ties with their home cultures and indicated less agreement that they were looked down upon for practicing their native customs" (p. 323). As adaptation and increased well-being of international workers is improved by positive relationships with coworkers from the host country, in this case the United States, it seems clear that any acculturative program to increase interaction and understanding between Latin-American and Anglo-American players would be a positive one (Amason *et al.*, 1999).

The final theme of the youth of prospects had fewer suggestions for improvement, other than finding ways for young prospects to finish their education. The structure of scouting players and current lack of a worldwide draft seem to ensure that the signing of Latin-American prospects at a younger age will not end in the near future. While signing players at a young age presents additional challenges in terms of maturity, there is at least one positive; Mamman (1995) explained that, "The older one becomes the more difficult it is to adapt to a new cultural system. In other words, younger people are more flexible in adapting to a new environment" (p. 536). Whether there is a discernible difference between a prospect signed at 16 and a prospect signed at 19 (as opposed to a larger age difference) was not explored, but this does seem to suggest that with the right levels of support, young Latin-American players should acculturate fairly well to a new environment.

Implications of Findings

The findings of this research are extremely relevant to the fields of sport management and sport sociology. With Latin-American players making up a sizeable portion of major-league rosters, and an even larger portion of the minor-league system, understanding how to best help them achieve their on-field goals and perform to their maximum potential is paramount to an organization's success in professional baseball. The professional implications of not providing adequate support have been detailed above; there are professional costs associated with not assuring that Latin-American prospects have methods available to them to assist in their acculturation to playing baseball in the United States; "There are a number of costs (e.g. high turnover, absenteeism, recruiting and retraining costs, miscommunication, conflict, etc) associated

with not being proactive when it comes to diversity" (Arai *et al*., 2001, p. 446). This research will hopefully also help organizations gain more of a cultural understanding of their employees, which could help lead to more diversity efforts and greater intercultural understanding between management and other players. Understanding the stresses that Latin-American athletes go through will help sports sociologists further analyze the acculturation process not only for athletes, but for foreign nationals in general. Understanding what support to provide for international athletes may have implications at all levels of sport, as immigration will continue to be a part of the American landscape, and international athletes will continue to be a familiar part of the American sport realm.

Recommendations

In order to implement any changes to an organization's current policies, management must be convinced that changes will positively affect the organization (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Vandenheuvel and Wooden (1997) discuss this from the theoretical framework of the human capital model:

> The key assumption underlying the human capital model (Becker 1964; Mincer 1974) is that investment in training on the part of both the employer and the employee is based on cost-benefit considerations. For employers, the benefits from training accrue in the form of increased productivity…For workers, the main benefits from training come in the form of higher earnings and increased promotion and career opportunities… Training will be offered to workers when the costs of the training are lower than the long-term benefits which the firm expects to derive from providing the training. (p. 832)

Hopefully the above research will show that the benefits of offering acculturative support to Latin-American players far outweigh the cost associated with providing these services.

One notable aspect of the study was the great variation in support methods between organizations. This should not be that surprising, as the literature shows that

differences in support for diverse employees, "reflects the values of the organization and the individuals in that organization. Therefore, it is not surprising to find diversity…initiatives differing, sometimes significantly, from organization to organization" (Arai, Wanca-Thibault, & Shockley-Zalabak, p. 449). Different organizational philosophies of organizations will lead to different priorities among their acculturation programs, and differing levels of importance being placed on the programs as a whole. While a league-wide mandate on the support systems teams need to offer at a minimum may not be feasible, organizations should certainly consider steps to move towards the idea of becoming a more multicultural organization, where diversity is supported and utilized; this environment seems as though it would be an extremely beneficial environment for Latin-American players. An organization with a culture of diversity is defined by Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) as:

> Characterized by an underlying respect for differences, as well as flexibility, innovation, risk acceptance, tolerance of ambiguity, conflict acceptance, people orientation, and an orientation toward the future…it is acknowledged that individuals bring their personal cultures to the workplace, and those differences are capitalized on to the benefit of the individual, the group, and the organization (p. 289).

Organizations which value cultural diversity tend to see the benefits of that diversity within their workforce (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999). Also, Powell (1993), "points out that within multicultural organizations, conflict is low due to the general absence of prejudice and discrimination" (DeSensi, 1994, p. 64).

The most effective way for this change to occur is from the top-down; organizations with managements that value their Latin-American players and the

successful diversity of their players will implement policies that should have a trickle-down effect to all levels of the organization. Fink *et al*. (2001) explain:

> Leaders, and their attitudes toward diversity, can go a long way in "molding" an organization's diversity culture. That is, a leader or leaders will be responsible for implementing the policies aimed toward the management of diversity, providing the human and fiscal resources necessary to carry through on those policies, and providing the clout to ensure that specific diversity management techniques are nurtured and rewarded. While a leader cannot "dictate" that all members share in the beliefs of the benefits of diversity, they can set up the policies, procedures, and practices necessary for such beliefs to be fostered (p. 40).

Top management support is critical for effecting long-term change and for implementing the organizational culture to support a movement toward increased diversity practices (Arai *et al.*, 2001). Hodson (2002) also found that, "Positive managerial behavior supportive of worker's dignity and productivity not only encourages meaning and satisfaction at work, but also reduces both horizontal and vertical conflict" (p. 311). Being supportive of Latin-American players and aiding in their acculturation to the best of an organization's ability will produce a more content, satisfied, and productive player.

In terms of more specific suggestions than changing the organizational culture, the above sections discussed increasing English language support and media training. Another aspect to consider is differentiating support methods between players from different countries. Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) explain, "It would be (a fallacy) to assume that every individual possesses all the characteristics of his or her cultural group. Doing so can lead to inaccurate and harmful stereotyping" (p. 283). Due to cultural, socioeconomic, age, and other differences, players from Cuba may face different challenges than players from the Dominican Republic, Panama, Venezuela, etc. While financial and organizational limitations may lead to the need for one overarching policy,

as is currently used by all the interviewed organizations, it may be beneficial to consider the differing cultural factors for players from different countries, even within the same region of the world, instead of assuming cultural universality. More data on this is necessary, however, to determine if enough benefit would be provided for organizations to justify the added cost.

In the end, as Porter (1995) explains, "The healthy growth and survival of an organism or an organization is dependent on its ability to adapt -change- to strengthen its position in an ever-changing environment" (p. 41). The Latin-American presence in baseball is a steady force, and does not appear to be decreasing any time in the near future. Just as society in the United States is adapting to account for the increasing Latino population, professional baseball must adapt in order to ensure players will not only be as productive as possible for their teams, but also treated well as human beings and given the opportunity to succeed and thrive in a new environment. Baseball is a richer game because of the contributions of Latin-American players, and ensuring their smooth acculturation will guarantee that their successes in professional baseball will continue on into the future.

Limitations of Study

There were several limitations related to this study's sample and research design. The sample size was fairly limited based on the availability of individuals with expertise in this area, meaning the generalizability of the results is lessened. The high proportion of front-office respondents to former players also limited the different perspectives available for analysis in this research. The former players played in the minor-leagues prior to 2000, which may have dated their responses somewhat. Also, both players were

proficient in English at the time of the interviews, which may have given them a different perspective than players who are not currently proficient in English. The QDA Miner results were also coded only by a single researcher, which may reduce the scientific validity of the results.

Suggestions for Future Research

Given the limited amount of literature on this area of study, there are many possible implications of future research. From a social perspective, a more in-depth study of the cultural factors influencing acculturation difficulties of Latin-Americans could provide more valid suggestions related to acculturative support methods. Research involving the social views and stereotypes of Anglo-Americans about Latin-Americans is a growing field, and more studies in this area could also help teams understand the societal attitudes that young prospects are dealing with upon arriving in the U.S. Differentiating between prospects from different countries and their necessarily different cultural backgrounds may also provide insight. Examining the acculturation aspect strictly from a player's perspective would be incredibly valuable, instead of focusing on the front-office approach; using more current players would also be beneficial for application to current organizations and teams. This angle of research would not only provide information on the player's opinions of current acculturative practices, but also their attitudes and beliefs about acculturation and whether they view it as a positive or negative experience. Studying acculturative methods in the academies, before prospects arrive in the United States, would also provide valuable background information and assist U.S. teams in understanding what kind of a base their prospects will most likely have established upon their arrival in the U.S. Further examination of Latin-American

players and their relationship to the U.S. media could also provide information as to how teams can better help players adapt to working with the media on a regular basis. Examining the difference between this general study and Latin-American players who come to the U.S. to play in an intercollegiate setting before playing professionally could also provide insight as to the differing challenges faced, and if there are any common applications of this research.

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Appendices

Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

"An Examination of Resources Provided to Aid in the Cultural Transition of Latin-American Baseball Players in the South Atlantic League."

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine the methods of support provided to Latin-American baseball players in the South Atlantic League to assist in their cultural transition to the United States.

PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be participating in a phone interview lasting approximately 15 minutes. In the interview, you will be asked a list of questions focusing on the support provided to players and your opinions of the effectiveness of the methods. The interviews will be digitally recorded to ensure accuracy in your responses.

RISKS

There are no risks involved in participation in this study

BENEFITS

The benefit of participating in this research study is to help contribute to the body of knowledge in the cultural study of Latin-American baseball players.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All interviews and interview transcriptions will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and all information will be accessible only to the researcher and faculty advisor. After the data from the interview has been recorded and transcribed, it will be deleted from the audio recorder. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

The University of Tennessee does not "automatically" reimburse research participants for medical claims or other compensation. If physical injury is suffered in the course of research, or for more information, you should notify the University of Tennessee's Office of Research (865) 974-7697.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Lauren Osmer, at 1914 Andy Holt Ave. HPER 332, Knoxville, TN 37916, and (704) 299-7252. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT
I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B

Front-Office Staff Interview Questions

1. Do you provide any support for Latin-American players to aid in their cultural transition? / What methods of support do you provide?
2. Do you offer any forms of support away from the ballpark?
3. Can you tell me a little specifically about the resources you have to assist the players in terms of the language barrier, if any?
4. In your support do you differentiate between players from different countries or do you have one overarching policy for all Latin-American players?
5. Do you specifically offer media training for Latin-American players?
6. Do you think Latin-American players face additional challenges or have additional advantages as compared to a player born and raised in the United States?
7. Do you think the social views and/or stereotypes of media and fans can affect Latin-American players' development?
8. In one article, the author suggested the Latin-American players had an attrition rate of 90-95% in terms of making it to the major league level, as opposed to an attrition rate of 82% for minor-leaguers in general. Do those numbers seem reasonable to you, and if so why do you think there is such a high attrition rate among Latin-American players?
9. Do you have any Spanish-speaking coaches on staff at the Single-A level?
10. Do you provide assistance for former players if they are released from the organization?
11. Do you think the support you currently provide for Latin-American players is beneficial?
12. What do you feel could be done to improve the support system you have in place for those players, if anything?
13. Is there anything else you'd like to add/Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix C

Former Player Interview Questions

1. When you played at the Single-A level, did you receive any kind of cultural support? / What cultural support was provided for you?
2. Was support offered away from the field or only when you were at the stadium?
3. Do you think Latin-American players face more challenges when entering professional baseball in the United States than American-born players?
4. Did you feel as though you had any specific challenges upon your arrival in professional baseball?
5. How did you deal with the language barrier, if there was one?
6. Did you have any training on how to communicate with the media?
7. Did you feel as though you experienced any stereotypes or bias from people inside or outside the organization during your time at the Single-A level?
8. Did you receive any support from people other than the team?
9. Did you feel as though the support or lack of support you received affected your play on the field? In what way?
10. Do you think the support provided for you during your time at the Single-A level was beneficial?
11. Do you have any suggestions of other ways the organization could offer support that would have made the cultural transition easier for you?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to add/Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix D

IRB Application

FORM B APPLICATION

All applicants are encouraged to read the Form B guidelines. If you have any questions as you develop your Form B, contact your Departmental Review Committee (DRC) or Research Compliance Services at the Office of Research.

FORM B

IRB # _____

Date Received in OR _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. **Principal Investigator Co-Principal Investigator:**
   Lauren Osmer
   Address: XXXXX
   XXXXXXXXXXX
   Phone: XXXXXX
   Email: XXXXXXX

   Faculty Advisor:
   Robin Hardin
   Address: XXXXXX
   XXXXXXXXXXXX
   Phone: XXXXXXXX

Email: XXXXXXX

Department:
Kinesiology, Recreation & Sport Studies

2. **Project Classification:**
   Masters Thesis

3. **Title of Project:**
   "An Examination of Resources Provided to Aid in the Cultural Transition of Latin-American Baseball Players in the South Atlantic League."

4. **Starting Date:**
   Upon IRB approval

5. **Estimated Completion Date:**
   May 1, 2011

6. **External Funding** *(if any)**:*** N/A

   - **Grant/Contract Submission Deadline:**
     N/A
   - **Funding Agency:**
     N/A
   - **Sponsor ID Number *(if known)*:**
     N/A
   - **UT Proposal Number *(if known):***
     N/A

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to examine the resources provided by the South Atlantic League of professional baseball to aid in the cultural transition of Latin-American baseball players to the United States. The primary research questions in this study are:

1. What support is provided for Latin-American players at the Low-A level of Major League Baseball to help aid in their cultural transition?
2. Are the support methods provided effective in helping them transition?
3. What types of support do Latin-American players feel they need the most upon their entry into professional baseball in the U.S.?

Studies have shown that 90-95% of Latin-American players who sign with U.S. professional teams don't make it beyond the minor leagues. This research will examine teams at the Low-A level of professional baseball in the United States, often one of the first levels players participate in after coming from abroad. At this level, the study will examine what methods of support are provided to aid the players in their cultural transition to working and living in the United States and if the teams and players feel that the current methods are effective.

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The main participants in this study will be administrative personnel from the South Atlantic Baseball League; mainly General Managers but possibly other front-office staff depending on who the General Manager believes best qualified to answer the interview questions. All 14 teams in the South Atlantic League will be contacted and the number of participants will be however many agree to participate, 14 at the maximum.

The researcher may also include as participants former players from South Atlantic League teams, dependent on availability. The criteria for these participants will be based on being Latin-American and having played for one of the teams in the South Atlantic League at a point in the past. By including former players as participants, the researcher will be able to account for their experiences and determine if there are differences or similarities in the positives and negatives they identify in their transition process as compared to the team officials.

Interviews will be arranged through email contacts with the organizations according to availability as well as their agreement to participate.

All invited participants will be 18 or older. No incentives will be offered for participation in this research.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Upon agreeing to participate, interviews with the front-office personnel will be scheduled over email contact depending on their schedule and availability. Participants will be faxed the informed consent statement at least three days in advance and, if agreeing to continue in the study, will sign the consent form and return it via fax to the researcher.

Semi-structured interviews will then take place with the participants. Interviews will focus on the support provided to Latin-American players at the Low-A level of minor league baseball and the opinions of the participants on the effectiveness of these procedures. A list of common questions (Appendix I) will be asked but the semi-structured format of these interviews will allow them to be conducted in a conversational format to allow potential follow-up questions, to allow the participant to speak freely, and to provide for open coding in the data analysis. Interviews will last approximately 30 minutes.

If possible, a semi-structured interview with former players from the South Atlantic League will also be sought. These interviews will focus on the personal experiences of the players in regards to transitioning into professional baseball in the United States and their opinions on the support provided for them, including suggestions for possible change. A list of common questions (Appendix II) will be asked but interviews will be conducted in a conversational format to allow potential follow-up questions, to allow the participant to speak freely, and to provide for open coding in the data analysis. These interviews will also last approximately 30 minutes.

Interviews will take place over the phone and will be recorded by a digital recording device for accuracy, contingent on the participant's permission. All interview transcripts will be kept in Microsoft Word documents both on a hard drive (password protected) and on a separate USB flash drive, which will be stored in a locked office at the University of Tennessee (HPER 335). Notes taken during the interviews will be taken in a notebook by hand and later transcribed into a Word document, which will be stored in the same manner as the interview transcripts.

Following the interviews, QDA Miner software will be used to code the data and help assist with the content analysis process.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

There are minimal risks to participants in this study.

The researcher will take every precaution to protect the identity and responses of all participants. All conversation in the interviews with both front-office staff and former players will be kept confidential. In order to protect the identity of the interviewees, each participant will be assigned a pseudonym that will be referenced in the interview transcript and subsequent publications. Information pertaining to the participants' identities will be kept in a locked office (HPER 335). The faculty advisor will have no knowledge of the participants' true identities; only the researcher will know such information. All participants will have the option to discontinue participation at any time for any reason, as stated on the informed consent form. If the participant

chooses to no longer participate in the study, any answers or information provided by the participant will be destroyed by the researcher. The entirety of that participant's interview will not be included in the study. Following completion of the study, interview transcriptions will be destroyed.

VI. BENEFITS

Participants will add to the body of knowledge on the cultural adjustment of Latin-American players to playing professional baseball in the United States. The results of the study may help professional and independent teams to identify some of the concerns and challenges these athletes face and alter their procedures accordingly in order to give these athletes the best chance of success.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS

Each participant will be faxed an informed consent form (Appendix III) to read and sign prior to the interview. The consent form will inform participants of the requirements and goals of the study and establish their rights as subjects. They will also be told they may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. Participation will be voluntary, and the participants will not receive payment of any kind for their participation. If a consent form is not signed, the participant will not be allowed to continue with the interview. The consent forms will be kept by the principal investigator for at least three years and will be locked in the faculty advisor's office at the University of Tennessee.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The principle investigator, Lauren Osmer, is a second-year Masters student at The University of Tennessee majoring in Recreation and Sport Management. The investigator has completed a required Research Methods class and will be counseled by Dr. Rob Hardin and Dr. Sylvia Trendafilova.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH

Interviews will be conducted over the phone and recorded with a digital recording device for later transcription. QDA Miner software will be used to code the interviews following transcription and the transcripts and notes will be stored on the researcher's HP laptop computer.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

1. Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.

2. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.

3. An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.

4. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.

XI. SIGNATURES

Principal Investigator: _____Lauren M. Osmer_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Co-Principal Investigator: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Advisor (if any): _____Dr. Robin Hardin_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:

[ ] Expedited Review -- Category(s): _____

OR

[ ] Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Department Head: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services for final approval on (Date) : _____

Approved:
Research Compliance Services
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue

Signature: _____ Date: _____

For additional information on Form B, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer or by phone at (865) 974-3466.

APPENDIX I

FRONT-OFFICE STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What methods of support do you provide for Latin-American players to aid in their cultural transition?
2. Do you offer any forms of support away from the park? (i.e. educational classes)
3. Specifically in terms of the language barrier, what resources do you have to assist the players?
4. In your support do you differentiate between players from different countries or have one overarching policy for all Latin-American players?
5. Do you specifically offer media training for Latin-American players?
6. Do you think Latin-American players face additional challenges or have additional advantages as compared to a player born and raised in the United States?
7. Do you think the social views and stereotypes of media and fans can affect Latin-American players' development?
8. Why do you think there is such a high attrition rate among Latin-American players?
9. Diversity among front office/coaching staff?
10. Do you provide assistance for former players if they are released from the organization? Specifically Latin-American players?
11. Do you think the support you currently provide for Latin-American players is effective?
12. Do you think the support you currently provide for Latin-American players is enough? If not, do you have any suggestions as to what additions should be made?

APPENDIX II

FORMER PLAYER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When you played in the South Atlantic League, what cultural support was provided for you?
2. Was support offered away from the field or only when you were at the stadium?
3. Do you think Latin-American players face more challenges when entering professional baseball in the United States than American-born players?
4. Did you feel as though you had any specific challenges upon your arrival in the South Atlantic League?
5. How did you deal with the language barrier?
6. How did you interact with the media? Were you given any organizational support in doing so?
7. Did you feel as though you experienced any stereotypes or bias from people inside or outside of the organization during your time in the South Atlantic League?
8. Did you receive any support from people other than the team?
9. Do you feel as though the support or lack of support you received affected your play on the field? In what way?
10. Do you think the support provided for you during your time in the South Atlantic League was effective?
11. Do you think the support provided for you during your time in the South Atlantic League was enough?
12. Do you have any suggestions of other ways the organization could offer support that would have made the cultural transition easier for you?

APPENDIX III

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

"An Examination of Resources Provided to Aid in the Cultural Transition of Latin-American Baseball Players in the South Atlantic League."

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine the methods of support provided to Latin-American baseball players in the South Atlantic League to assist in their cultural transition to the United States.

PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be participating in a phone interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. In the interview, you will be asked a list of questions focusing on the support provided to players and your opinions of the effectiveness of the methods. The interviews will be digitally recorded to ensure accuracy in your responses.

RISKS

There are no risks involved in participation in this study

BENEFITS

The benefit of participating in this research study is to help contribute to the body of knowledge in the cultural study of Latin-American baseball players.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All interviews and interview transcriptions will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and all information will be accessible only to the researcher and faculty advisor. After the data from the interview has been recorded and transcribed, it will be deleted from the audio recorder. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

The University of Tennessee does not "automatically" reimburse research participants for medical claims or other compensation. If physical injury is suffered in the course of research, or for more information, you should notify the University of Tennessee's Office of Research (865) 974-7697.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Lauren Osmer, at 1914 Andy Holt Ave. HPER 332, Knoxville, TN 37916, and (704) 299-7252. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT
I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

VITA

Lauren Melanie Osmer was born in Dunedin, Florida and still somehow managed to become a fervent Green Bay Packers and Atlanta Braves fan. After graduating with honors from E.E. Waddell High School in Charlotte, North Carolina, she completed her undergraduate studies at Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin and received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a concentration in Military History. She then pursued her Graduate studies at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. She will graduate with her Masters of Science in Sports Studies (Sports Management concentration) in August 2011.