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Diversity Outreach in Major League Baseball: A Stakeholder Approach

Shaun M. Anderson

Dissertation submitted
to the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in
Communication Studies

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Keywords: Major League Baseball, diversity, Stakeholder Theory, Corporate Social Responsibility, interorganizational communication, sport communication

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ABSTRACT

Diversity Outreach in Major League Baseball: A Stakeholder Approach

Shaun M. Anderson

Despite the prevalence and magnitude of community engagement within professional sporting organizations, limited attention has been devoted to understanding the significance and impact of these activities to the success and survival of the organization (Garrard, 2007). Consequently, the focus of this dissertation focused on Major League Baseball (MLB) because this organization has established efforts for engaging individuals from diverse communities, but is still failing in their efforts of diversity and inclusion from an external stakeholder perspective. In 1989, MLB implemented programs (e.g., Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI), Urban Youth Academy (UYA) to help diversify their team roster and fan base. Despite these efforts, Major League Baseball (UYA) is still facing the issue that team rosters and fan bases are majority white. In Study one of this dissertation, the researcher interviewed 11 RBI/UYA program managers representing 11 MLB teams. The program managers were asked questions regarding the specific programs they ran, why the programs were launched, the success of the programs, and the challenges in get black youth involved in the game. The results of study one revealed that program managers ran the RBI programs and baseball clinics, launched the programs to introduce the game of baseball to underserved youth, reported that attendance is how define success, and that parental involvement was the biggest challenge in getting black youth involved in the game. For study two, individuals completed a questionnaire focused on perceptions MLB outreach efforts and whether or not it would be positively associated with commitment to the team, perceptions of MLB image, identity to the team, and MLB social responsiveness. Results for study two showed that all four variables were positively associated with MLB outreach efforts. A discussion for both studies, implications, and future directions were also discussed.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

On April 21, 2015, comedian Chris Rock was a featured guest on *Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel* (Wright, 2015). In his segment rock gave a mostly negative review of Major League Baseball’s (MLB) efforts in diversity and inclusion with the African-American community. Rock claimed that the MLB's main problem is its weak efforts to stay current with how our society is becoming more diverse. Further, Rock explained that the MLB has made inadequate efforts to reach out to individuals from different backgrounds. Additionally, he went on to give reasons as to why these issues exist, including the pace of the game. Also, he said that the stadium décor reminds individuals from diverse communities of the times in which minorities were not allowed to play nor attend these games. Although his segment had its humorous moments, what he shared was all too serious.

The question that remains is why is baseball struggling with the African-American community? Fountain (2011) found that the ability to spend money on other things, the opportunity to watch events on television, and the cost of ticket prices constrained baseball attendance among minority populations. Other factors that impact the attendance at MLB games include the importance of cultural events (i.e., family appeal, social interaction, promotions, and entertainment) and event attractiveness (i.e., the skill and speed of activity, athletes, quality of teams, team/organization image, and pride in/support for local team) (Armstrong, 2008; Blank, Sweeney, & Fuller, 2014).

Several scholars have investigated why African-American youth favor football and basketball over baseball. Ogden and Hilt (2003) found four factors that contributed to the lack of interest by African-American youth in the game of baseball, but an increased interest in
basketball. These were: an exorbitant amount of African-American role models in basketball, the perception of social mobility in basketball, authority figures describing basketball as more beneficial, and basketball’s ability to allow players to express themselves/feel empowered. In another study, Fortunato and Williams (2010) found that professional baseball receives far less media exposure than professional football and basketball; further making it less attractive for individuals from minority backgrounds to become involved with the game.

Additionally, Ogden and Rose (2005) used Gidden’s Structuration Theory to determine why baseball involvement was waning in the African-American community. They determined that mass mediated factors such as advertisements featuring football and basketball stars and the influence of hip-hop on these sports were some of the main reasons as to why the African-American community has become less involved in baseball. From a socioeconomic perspective, Ogden and Rose explained that sports such as basketball are cheaper to play than baseball. Also, factors such as peer pressure, perceived social mobility through football and basketball, and the “cool” factor of baseball were other reasons as to why baseball in the African-American community was on the decline.

In an effort to increase participation in baseball from individuals from the African-American community, Major League Baseball created two programs: Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities and the Urban Youth Academy. Although all 30 MLB teams operate one or both of these programs, participation from African-American people in Major League Baseball continues to decrease. Thus, this dissertation served multiple purposes. First, this dissertation investigated what are the specific challenges MLB faces in involvement from African-Americans. Additionally, this dissertation examined the perceptions of these programs from individuals who participate in the programs.
Chapter one of this dissertation provides a brief history of MLB, the Negro Leagues, and the integration of MLB. Second, this dissertation analyzed the specific RBI/UYA programs offered by MLB. Additionally, this chapter proposes Stakeholder Theory as the framework for this work. Then, this chapter focuses on how this theory connects to diversity issues within MLB. Lastly, research questions and hypotheses were forwarded. In the title of this dissertation, the focus is on diversity within MLB. For the purposes of this study, diversity can be described by the following statement:

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual (Definition of Diversity, n.d.).

While recognizing the complexity of studying diverse populations, the particular focus of this study is on African-American involvement in Major League Baseball. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the term diversity is exclusively focused on African-Americans.

**History of Major League of Baseball**

The origins of when the game of baseball was created are unclear, although, some individuals have credited the game of baseball as being established in the mid-19th century. Soon after the Civil War, the game of baseball began to flourish as a national past time. Because of its increasing popularity, a group of businesspersons formed what would be considered the first Major League baseball association in 1871 entitled The National Association (Rubinstein, 2003).
At this time, 24 professional baseball clubs were established in various cities throughout the United States. These clubs played games amongst themselves. The National Association enjoyed a moderate amount of success but found itself struggling after five years of existence. Because of its struggles, some team owners and a few players from various teams decided to restructure the organization in 1876 and officially formed the National League (NL).

Professional baseball went through a series of trials by error for the next few decades, including the establishment of the short-lived American Association and the Player's League. But it was at the turn of the century that professional baseball began to become a mainstay of American society. In 1900, Byron Bancroft Johnson established the American League (AL) as an alternative to the NL. He explained that the American League would restore credibility and order to the game of baseball, from which the NL was accused of lacking due to issues of gambling and racketeering. For the next three years, the AL and NL had gained prominence as the two main leagues of professional baseball. As a result, leaders of the AL and NL met in 1903 to sign the National Agreement that would consolidate both leagues under the rule of the two league presidents and an arbitrary outside commissioner. It was during this agreement that the current Major League Baseball (MLB) league was created.

Between 1903 and 1920, MLB faced many scandals, none of which were more significant than the onslaught of gambling that was taking place (Blaisdell, 2007). Many MLB players complained of not getting paid their fair salary. So, to supplement their income, they would intentionally lose games so that they could get paid illegal earnings from gamblers who bet on games. Major League Baseball recognized these issues and felt compelled to restructure the rules and regulations of the National Agreement.
In 1920, MLB team owners agreed to hire Kenesaw Mountain Landis to serve as the commissioner under the new ordinance. Landis, a federal judge, was brought to bring order to baseball. He acted swiftly in punishing players who participated in intentionally losing games by banning them from the game of baseball. Landis was praised for his efforts in establishing credibility and positive image in Major League Baseball throughout his tenure. However, one issue that Landis refused to assuage was breaking the color line in the MLB.

Since the inception of professional baseball to the end of Landis’ tenure, MLB was strict on its rules of not allowing non-White players in the sport. Lou Castro, who is of Colombian decent, played only 42 games for the National League a year before the National Agreement was signed (Mckenna, n. d.). However, Castro’s ethnicity and place of birth have been disputed, which questions the entry of non-white players in professional baseball. Because of the ban on non-white players in professional baseball, many of these individuals took matters into their hands. Beginning in 1920, a group of African-American business persons convened with each other to form several teams that employed only African-American baseball players on their team rosters. These teams became known as the Negro Leagues, which served both as an alternative and a threat to Major League Baseball.

Babe Ruth, Rube Foster, and Negro League Baseball. While Kenesaw Mountain Landis was credited with bringing integrity back to baseball, he still refused to allow African-American players in the Major League (Ward & Burns, 1994). While this remained an issue for over twenty more years, a new era of baseball was taking over. Hall of Fame pitchers such as Cy Young were used to the game of baseball being low scoring; essentially being won by the skill of pitching. But the game began to switch to one that focused on home run hitters.
George Herman “Babe” Ruth was born on February 6, 1895 in Baltimore, MD to working class parents of German ancestry. As a youth, he got into much trouble; so much trouble that his parents decided to send him to reform school. While in reform school he excelled at playing baseball. He became so good that he signed a contract to play Major League Baseball at the age of 19 with the Boston Red Sox.

From 1914 to 1919, Babe Ruth began his development as a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox. He had a modest earned run average (ERA) during his first three seasons as a pitcher. However, it was in 1918 were Ruth began to become known for his hitting skills along with his pitching. In 1919, he became a household name because of his ability to hit homeruns. However, another issue plaguing the nation would help issue in a new brand of baseball.

An African-American teenager from Chicago had drowned in Lake Michigan after he was stoned to death by white youth for violating what was considered an unofficial segregation of the beaches. The white youth were not arrested even when eyewitnesses identified the culprits. This lead to a week of rioting among African-American and white Chicagoans; ultimately leading to the deaths of 15 whites and 23 African-Americans along with more than 1000 African-American families losing their homes due to fires caused by rioters (McWhirter, 2011). These civil unrests spawned a revolutionary mentality by African-American America. In baseball specifically, one African-American businessman decided to take matters into his own hands. This man was Andrew Foster.

Andrew “Rube” Foster was born on September 17, 1879 in Calvert, TX. He grew up to become known as one of the best pitchers in baseball history. Later on in his career, he become focused on managing teams while still pitching in some games. The team that brought him the
most success were the Chicago American Giants. It was with this team that Foster assumed the role of owner and manager in 1917 (Carroll, 2006).

Following the race riots of 1919 and Major League Baseball’s focus of keeping out African-American players, Foster and owners of other Midwestern determined that they were going to create a separate independent baseball league that showcased African American talent. So in 1920, these gentlemen met at a Kansas City Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) to form the National Negro League (NNL), which included teams such as the Kansas City Monarchs and the Chicago American Giants.

While there were other predominantly African-American baseball teams that had success prior to 1920, it was when the National Negro League formed that many of the African-American players began to be known as superstars (Ward & Burns, 1994). Two of the more well known Negro League players were Leroy Roberts “Satchell” Paige and Joshua “Josh” Gibson. Paige was arguably considered the best pitcher to ever play and Gibson was arguably considered the greatest hitter to every play. In fact, in some circles, Gibson was known as the African-American Babe Ruth. However, in other circles, Ruth was known as the white Josh Gibson.

Along with the emergence of the Negro Leagues, Ruth’s contract was bought out by the New York Yankees. There, he began to be known as “The Sultan of Swat” because of his reputation for hitting homeruns. Ruth was making the game of baseball entertaining. As a result, Foster admonished his Negro League players to play in two ways: fast and aggressive. This method of play brought many African-American fans to watch Negro League games.

**Death of foster and integration.** The National Negro League flourished under Foster. The League established itself as the premiere league for African-American baseball players. African-American fans were selling out Negro League games because of the invigorating and
entertaining play of the African-American stars such as Paige and Gibson. However, Foster and his National League began to face opposition.

A promoter named Nat Strong collaborated with some owners of the National Negro League in order to form the Eastern Colored League (ECL) (Ward & Burns, 1994). This league became the direct competition of the National Negro League. Foster continued to push the NNL as the premiere league for African-American baseball. Unfortunately, his efforts caused him to have a nervous breakdown in 1926. He was admitted into an asylum shortly thereafter and died fours years later at the age of 51.

The ECL only lasted 5 years (1923-1928). The NNL only lasted one year after Foster died, disbanding in 1931. Still, Negro League baseball continued to flourish despite not having an organized system such as the NNL in place. Paige and Gibson continued their dominance in pitching and hitting respectively.

Major League Baseball continued its segregation of Major League Baseball but rumors were emerging that MLB was considering openings its doors for African-American players to play baseball. This become more evident when Kenesaw Landis died in 1944. Happy Chandler, a former senator from the state of Kentucky, stepped in as the second MLB Commissioner in 1945. When asked whether or not baseball should be integrated Chandler explained that if African-American men can fight in the war, then they can play baseball. Shortly thereafter, MLB began their push for integration (Ward & Burns, 1994).

Recognizing the leverage and potential profits that MLB could gain from the Negro League fan base, Branch Rickey began formulating a plan to introduce baseball to its first African-American player. In 1942, Rickey was serving as the President and General Manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers. A savvy business persons, Rickey was integral to establishing a farm
system that MLB could use to develop players who had the potential to be great players but lacked the experience.

Rickey spent time scouting Negro League players who could be a good fit in MLB. Traditional players such as "Satchel" Paige and Josh Gibson were very talented but lacked the social skills he felt a player needed to be able to interact with white players at the time. As a result, Rickey selected a relatively unknown Negro League player whom he felt had the intangibles of being a great MLB player (Ward & Burns, 1994).

Integration of major league baseball. Jack Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson was a shortstop for the Kansas City Monarchs, one of the more famous Negro League baseball team. Before his time with the Monarchs, Robinson was a multiple sports athlete at the University of California, Los Angeles and was a lieutenant in the military. Rickey believed that because of Robinson's previous association with white people from his college and military days, he would be well suited for the transition into Major League Baseball. Rickey signed Robinson on August 28, 1945, and had him grow as a player through the Dodgers farm system. But it was on April 18, 1947, that Robinson made his debut as the first African-American player in Major League Baseball. Robinson faced various forms of racism during his ten years as a Major League player, but his legacy was able to pave the way for more non-white players to play baseball (Ward & Burns, 1947).

Eight years after Robinson integrated MLB, the Pittsburgh Pirates selected Robert Clemente as their rookie draft choice, making him one of the first players of Latin descent to play MLB in the modern era. Like Robinson, Clemente faced racial hardships along with being a foreign player throughout his 18-year tenure as an MLB player. Despite this, Clemente went on to have a Hall of Fame career and went on to be heralded as one of the greatest MLB players in
the games history. It was nearly a decade later that MLB introduced its first player of Asian decent (Ward & Burns, 1994).

In 1964 Masanori Murakami made his debut in Major League Baseball, making him the first Japanese player in the history of the game. Murakami played relief pitcher for the San Francisco Giants. But contract disputes between MLB and his Japanese league team, the Nankai Hawks, forced Murakami to return to Japan where he finished his baseball career. Since Robinson, Clemente, and Murakami’s installation into MLB, the game saw tremendous growth among non-white players. But recently, MLB has seen a steady decline in both the number of minority players in the game and the number of minorities in attendance of these games.

**Current issues in Major League Baseball.** According to an article from the Pew Research Center (Krogstad, 2014), diversity within Major League Baseball is almost parallel to the population makeup of the United States. Specifically, nearly 64% of the players who are on Major League Baseball teams are white. In contrast to this report, Hispanics were considered to be overrepresented in Major League Baseball in comparison to the U.S. population with 27% of them representing players in MLB and 17% representing the U.S. population. Also, African-American represented 7% of MLB players and 13% of the U.S. population, while Asian American represented nearly 2% of MLB population and 5% of the U.S. population.

Former MLB Commissioner, Bud Selig, worked to resolve this problem by creating a diversity task force geared towards diversity development within the sport. In fact, Selig explained that “as a social institution, Major League Baseball has an enormous social responsibility to provide equal opportunities for all people, both on and off the field” (MLB, 2013). Despite these efforts, MLB baseball is still faced with a startling statistic: During its 2015 opening day roster, MLB consisted of 868 players of which less than a third of its players are
minorities (Nightengale, 2015). This number is a major decline from nearly 30 years ago; when African-Americans alone represented 19% of MLB players.

An article from ESPN.com (Keown, 2013) hinted to the fact that MLB’s use of the pay-for-play tournaments that groom future MLB players is designed to accommodate rich white youth; ultimately leaving out individuals (i.e., African American youth) who don’t have the means and mobility to participate. With regards to youth baseball, the pay-for-play system is a system in which parents and/or guardians pay for their children to participate in elite youth baseball programs that help streamline youth who participate into the forefront of having a Major League Baseball career.

A former MLB executive (Solomon, 2014) explained that there are several factors that keep African-American from becoming involved. He explained that the expensiveness of playing the game, competition from football and basketball, lack of mentorship, overemphasis of Latinx recruiting, lack of NCAA scholarships, and the lack of marketing their African-Americans players has stunted African-American involvement in baseball.

Current white baseball players have also expressed their concerns about the lack of diversity within the game of baseball. Bryce Harper, current MLB player for the Washington Nationals was quoted as saying that baseball is,

a tired sport because you can’t express yourself. You can’t do what people in other sports do. I’m not saying baseball is, you know, boring or anything like that, but it’s the excitement of the young guys who are coming into the game now who have flair (Weinreb, 2016).
Harper went on to say that he does not want to say that the diversity disparities are exclusive only to race and ethnicity, but that identity to the game of baseball is typically geared towards a suburban middle-aged conservative.

Because of information such as this, many former and current MLB players have spoken out in concern. Former MLB player and Hall of Fame outfielder Dave Winfield recognized the potential problem over a decade ago: "Baseball, like any other business, should watch how it deals with diversity and inclusion… They are going to have to do a better job because it's your bottom line. It has to do with fans who are going to come and watch, the people who are going to play, and the people who are going to work for you, who you do business with. It comes down to your bottom line and once they understand that you have to have diversity and inclusion across all platforms, it's just going to be better for your business…You can over look it, but at your own peril" (Bultman, 2005).

Before the 2015 season, Pittsburgh Pirate outfielder Andrew McCutchen gave an account of his thoughts on diversity in MLB in an article he wrote in the Player’s Tribune, which is an online sporting news platform written exclusively by professional athletes (McCutchen, 2014). In his article, McCutchen recalled his frustration on the Jackie Robinson West Little League team getting their 2014 World Series revoked due to some players living outside of the geographical location of the team. McCutchen also stated that people could not expect inner city children or their parents to become involved with baseball if they are punished for such a small offense. He also explained that it is already tough to get inner-city youth involved in the game of baseball because many of them feel as if the game does not relate to them. Previous literature has suggested that organizations can operate more efficiently if they would learn how to engage and develop relationships with its consumers (Spaaij, 2013; 2015).
**Community engagement in sports.** The importance of sports organizations developing relationships within the communities that they serve has been established for many years (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). For the purposes of this study, community engagement is defined as “the process of working collaboratively with and for groups of people affiliated by geographical proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of the people (CDC, 1997, p. 9).

Like other organizations, sports teams have a responsibility of marketing and promoting their products and services to various stakeholders (e.g., fans, the community, local government). Cobourn (2014) explained in his article that professional sports organizations should consult with the communities that they operate in to determine the efficacy and relevance of their community initiatives. Also, she explained that teams should integrate community programming into their overall strategic vision. By doing this, she said, sport organizations create value for their stakeholders and may be more highly regarded as influential social, economic, and political agents. Additionally, developing partnerships within the community were identified as an effective way to gain support from these individuals. Lastly, she explained that creating a metric system was an important aspect of both monitoring the success of community initiatives and developing future strategies.

While community engagement is not the only factor contributing to success and survival, it has been acknowledged as an important part of the business (Hill & Green, 2000). In fact, the Australian Government (2008) mentioned that: “At the community level, sport brings together, break downs barriers and unites those who may have nothing else in common. Sport has a unique ability to transcend race, religion, gender, and creed. It is truly a social cohesion” (p. 2).
However, some scholars have explained that examining sport about community engagement should be conducted with caution. For example, Hutchins (2007) posited that: “Any attempt to use sport to promote community engagement and settlement must be informed by a critical awareness of its strengths and limitations as a social practice and cultural form” (p. 2). Still, some sports organizations have accepted their platform as an avenue to engage their specific communities.

For example, Satore-Baldwin and Walker (2011) conducted a study on The National Association for Stock Car Racing's (NASCAR) Drive for Diversity (DFD) community initiative to determine if it would be a predictor of future patron intentions. Additionally, the researchers examined if the perceived image of NASCAR moderates these same intentions. It was found that testing the initiative itself has a positive relationship with the intention to watch NASCAR on television. However, when image was measured along with the DFD initiative, individuals reported that they would not only watch NASCAR on television more frequently, but they would also purchase merchandise and tell others to frequent a NASCAR event. Although this is a positive step for NASCAR, MLB continues to lag in its outreach efforts.

**Social responsibility in sports.** It has been mentioned that sport organizations should become more responsible corporate citizens, especially when trying to maintain relationships with internal and external stakeholders (Alonso & O’Shea, 2012). Additionally, professional sports organizations are not considered immune to this expectation. Sport has long been understood as an institution contributing to the betterment of communities. Sports' ability to facilitate social inclusion, physical activity, and migrant community integration and support is centrally relevant to researchers and policy makers (Cobourn, 2014). Also, Bloyce and Smith’s
(2010) work referred to sport as a tool to help promote social inclusion and youth development through sport.

However, the assumption that sport can effectively fight social and physical concerns, or even have a positive impact on behavior-related problems (e.g. less involvement in crime) is interpreted with caution among researchers (Alonso & O’Shea, 2012). Indeed, making precise judgments regarding the perceived and actual benefits of sport is difficult, especially given the time needed to evaluate its potential and actual outcomes (Svensson, Huml, & Hancock, 2014). Further, there is concern that many of these initiatives ‘‘lack a coherent conceptual foundation’’ (Hartmann, 2003, p. 134) and can be misused.

Another aspect that threatens to limit the effectiveness of sports initiatives is the current lack of a theoretical understanding (Hartmann, 2003). Smith and Waddington (2004) supported this, contending that in ‘‘the absence of any clearly articulated theoretical rationale for these schemes ... even where success is claimed, it is unclear what specific aspects of the schemes account for that claimed success’’ (p. 294). Hartmann also referred to ‘‘non-sport components,’’ including education, as determinants of ‘‘success of any sport-based social interventionist program’’ (p. 134). Hartmann, therefore, argued that sport related initiatives may only be a complement, or, as Bloyce and Smith (2010) stated, a ‘‘differential contribution’’ (p. 106), instead of a solution for social and other forms of inequality. But how this translates to individuals supporting and consuming these sports remains to be seen.

Hansen and Gauthier (1989) found that consumer transaction-specific satisfaction was a stronger predictor for consumer attitudinal loyalty, followed by team identification and the average number of home games attended per year. To put it simply, Hansen and Gauthier found that the level of satisfaction and how individuals identified with teams determined their loyalty.
Despite the prevalence and magnitude of community engagement within professional sporting organizations, limited attention has been devoted to understanding the significance and impact of these activities to the success and survival of the organization (Garrard, 2007). While community engagement is not the only factor contributing to success and survival, it has been acknowledged as an important part of the business (Hill & Green, 2000). For example, Lapchick and Salas (2015) conducted a study that gave a report card on diversity within baseball. In their study, they gave MLB a grade of A when it comes to workplace diversity and a grade of C for gender hiring practices. They based the hiring practice score off of MLB’s hiring of minority individuals who hold either front office or team administration positions. Also, they based the gender practice score on the lack of women who hold managerial positions either in the front office or the teams themselves.

Lapchick and Salas’ (2015) study gave an account of the small percentage of minority players and lack of fan engagement among diversity audiences. They explained that the relationship between community engagement practices and the relative success of an organization should deserve attention. Accordingly, this study provides an analysis of community engagement practices aimed at helping to refine the necessary strategies and measures of community engagement.

While community engagement is not the only factor contributing to success and survival of sport team growth, it has been acknowledged as an important part of building relationships with stakeholders (Hill & Green, 2000). Given this, this study examined the importance of implementing diversity initiatives targeted to establishing a more diverse fan base among Major League Baseball teams. Additionally, this study provided an analysis of community engagement practices aimed at helping to refine the important strategies and measures of community engagement.
engagement and further, how this engagement could lead to positive in-group relations and increased game attendance among individuals from diverse populations. Lastly, this study examined the perceptions of individuals who participated in Major League Baseball’s Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities and Urban Youth Academy programs using Stakeholder Theory as a framework.

**Stakeholder Theory**

Stakeholder theory is an approach to business ethics that focuses on corporations’ responsibilities to their shareholders (Freeman, 1984). The axioms of this theory explain that shareholders are prominent individuals that must have their needs met by the corporation for the business to survive. Traditionally, shareholders are typically known as owners or stockholders of a company that must have their needs met to ensure the growth of the organization. Freeman (1984) extended the shareholder notion by suggesting that other individuals involved in the organization (i.e., customers, communities, suppliers, government agencies) are just as important to the corporation and must have their needs met as well. These individuals are what Freeman calls external stakeholders. Moreover, Freeman and colleagues explained that "stakeholder theory provides a systematic and concrete set of ideas around which one can begin to see what it means for a firm to care about ethics" (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010, p. 195). Furthermore, Freeman stated that, “each of these stakeholder groups has a right not to be treated as a means to some end, and therefore must participate in determining the future direction of the firm in which they have a stake” (Freeman, 2002, p. 39). Given this, Stakeholder Theory was established to help address three particular problems.

First, Stakeholder Theory was developed to help solve the problem of value and creation trade. Freeman (1984) felt that global corporations should recognize societal, national, and
industry changes when it comes to establishing business relationships. Specifically, organizations must understand societal trends that contribute to these changes. Further, he explained that organizations that did not value the understanding of these particular types of change would find themselves becoming less likely to meet their individual bottom lines.

Second, Stakeholder Theory was established to help solve the problem of the ethics of capitalism. Freeman and colleagues (2010) explained that business and ethics should not operate in separate realms. Rather, they posited that global financial issues (e.g. the 2008 recession) have led to a call for businesses to be more transparent and responsible regarding their policies and procedures. Additionally, they explained that these issues have caused organizations to question the ethics of capitalism as ways to gain the trust of their publics. With this focus, businesses are working to discover ways in which they can both meet their profit goals and be ethical in the process.

Thus, a third problem that Stakeholder Theory addresses are the challenges of developing the managerial mindset to meet both ethical and bottom line goals. Freeman and colleagues (2010) explained that for managers to meet global demand, managers must stay abreast of current socioeconomic trends. Managers of corporations must change their thinking to meet twenty-first century needs (e.g., become more open to individuals previously not marketed to). Additionally, they must bridge the relationship between the organizations and the individuals who affect and are affected by the corporation. If these three problems are resolved, then organizations are more likely to be trusted to be a more ethical and the corporations will be more profitable. Stakeholder Theory began to flourish as an area of research in the mid-1990's. During this time, researchers began to recognize the importance of business ethics as an important aspect of overall company success. It was Donaldson and Preston (1995) who understood that the
theory is descriptive, which means that it works best to describe an issue more so than resolving an issue.

The evolution of stakeholder theory. Since its introduction, Stakeholder Theory has been praised and criticized by a myriad of researchers. For example, Stieb (2008) explained that Freeman’s thoughts on economic, ethical, and legal approaches to business are invalid, especially when it comes to managerial decision making. Further, he explained that Stakeholder Theory either changes the concept of business too much or not at all, which he argued leaves too much up for interpretation in regards to the handling of business ethics.

However, Phillips, Freeman, and Wicks (2003) explained in an earlier study that Stakeholder Theory does not necessarily provide a blueprint for managers to make ethical decisions. Rather, they explained that Stakeholder Theory should only be used to show that managers must be accountable for the interests of all stakeholders when they make business decisions. They further explained that, "it is impossible to say a priori what these interests will be and how they may be accounted for due to the myriad ways that an organization might be arranged. Hence, it is impossible for such a theory to dictate specific action in the abstract" (p. 485).

Still, Orts and Strudler (2009) proposed that Stakeholder Theory should no longer be considered when forwarding ethical business decisions. They explained that they did not wish to eradicate the use of the theory, but wanted to narrow the scope of the theory because they claimed that the theory was too vague and over breadth. Additionally, they agreed with Stieb (2008) that different stakeholders have different interests; which makes decision making for managers difficult if they do not have a set of objectives in place to handle these issues.
Although the previous research described Stakeholder Theory as a concept that lacks objectives for management decision making, recent scholars have worked to ameliorate this problem. For example, Harrison and Wicks (2013) offered a four-factor perspective that they described as providing more value for stakeholders, helping academics to measure the concept, and providing managers of corporations with tangible ways of implementing ethical decisions.

First, Harrison and Wicks (2013) suggested that stakeholders will be gained by providing a good or service to the stakeholder. In regards to stakeholders within the community, the authors suggested that individuals from these areas offer opportunities for economic growth for the organization through either employment or the purchase of products that the organization offers. Therefore, the authors explained that it is reasonable for managers of organizations to provide a good or service that the stakeholder would perceive as a fair enough utility that warrants their continued support of the organization.

Second, Harrison and Wicks (2013) suggested that organizations should commit to the concept of organizational justice. Through the stakeholder lens, the way an organization treats one stakeholder will possibly influence the relationship with other stakeholders that affect or are affected by the organization. Therefore, they explained that establishing trusting relationships with stakeholders is crucial to the survival of the organization. Stakeholders are probably more likely to display behaviors such as loyalty and generosity if they perceive that the organization can be trusted to be fair in their relationship building. Furthermore, the authors explained that organizations must develop trust by considering the needs of stakeholders in decision-making processes and by initiating effective customer service transactions.

Third, Harwick and Wicks (2013) explained that stakeholders are prone to become more associated with organizations that share similar values. Specifically, stakeholders are more likely
to identify with organizations that focus on affiliating themselves with their needs. Social identity literature (more of this will be discussed later in the chapter) focuses on how individuals categorize themselves according to societal standards (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Concerning the stakeholders, individuals will classify themselves into particular groups or organizations to better understand their self-concepts.

Lastly, Harrison and Wicks (2013) explained that stakeholders must view the service and relationship they acquire from the organization to be of high quality. For example, if stakeholders perceived that organizations treated them with fairness, they are more likely to develop and maintain a relationship with that particular organization. From here, leaders of organizations have to be cautious in their decision making. One misstep with decisions that affect all stakeholders can lead to organization decline, at least from a profitability perspective.

Harrison and Wicks (2013) did not suggest that these four processes are permanent solutions to stakeholder engagement. Rather, they explained that these steps would more than likely build the most value for stakeholders. These methods were also compared to three current performance measurement perspectives to showcase differences in how companies assess stakeholders. Further, they explained both economic and non-economic factors are important when it comes to creating value for stakeholders. They went on to suggest how these factors should be determined through ethical decision making. Thus, the next section focuses on the decision-making process and ethical responsibilities of organizations according to Stakeholder Theory.

**Stakeholder management and decision making.** Managers of organizations are encouraged to value all stakeholders involved with their organizations. How managers make decisions regarding their stakeholders becomes a crucial element in that particular organization's
success and survival (Freeman, 1984). Managers who are effective in satisfying their stakeholders’ needs are more likely to build lasting relationships between the organization and the stakeholder. For this study, stakeholder management will be defined as “the process of forming, monitoring and maintaining constructive relationships with investors by influencing their expectations of gain resulting from their investment appropriately” (Freeman, 1984).

Hillman and Kiem (2001) explained that effectively managing relationships with stakeholders (e.g., the community, customers, and local governments) will increase the organization's value-creating exchanges. In other words, stakeholders would view their relationships as a valuable one and will more than likely reciprocate that value back to the organization. Also, they explained that this interaction aids in the positive reputation of the firm. To establish this, business scholars have established a process as to how managers can be successful in building positive stakeholder relationships.

Scholars have various thoughts on manager decision making regarding stakeholders. For example, it is suggested that managers should identify who their stakeholders are (Bryson, 2004; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Managers already have multiple tasks within their organizations to balance. Therefore, it is suggested that managers must be focused on the best methods in developing relationships with individuals who have a possible interest in their organization. Identifying the right stakeholders could help bring maximum profits to the organization while still focusing on being ethical.

Second, it is suggested that managers engage and communicate with stakeholders (O’Riordan & Fairbrass, 2014). Typically, stakeholders want to be kept abreast of organizational procedures that directly affect them. Being aware of these procedures could forward a sense of affiliation with the stakeholders and the organization. Therefore, managers should spend time
getting to know the unique experiences and backgrounds of their stakeholders. Third, it is suggested that organizations should be aware of societal changes (Gazley, Chang, & Bingham, 2010). With society becoming more and more diverse (e.g., culture, gender, religion), it is imperative that organizations begin to focus on how to establish relationships with individuals or communities who were once overlooked (Freeman, 1984). Mundy (2015) found evidence to back up this claim when he studied organizational diversity initiatives among public relations organizations. Mundy reported that there is a significant disconnect between what organizations intend to convey versus what is perceived by their publics. Consequently, organizations must work to be more socially responsible.

**Corporate social responsibility.** The concept of corporate social responsibility began in the late 1960’s (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010). Corporate social responsibility involves the decisions and actions that organizations consider that often go beyond the scope of the organizations' goals (Davis, 1960). It was spawned by the civil rights and women's rights movements that challenged the landscape of the social ills of that time.

Business scholars began to recognize these social movements as powerful influences that could impact the growth of organizations. Epstein (1969) examined the intersections of business and politics. He found that since many socioeconomic forces have taken shape to influence society, that it would be impossible to separate politics from business. Further, he explained that the mixed economy, which is a balance between free market capitalism and government regulated economies, began to influence how organizations dealt with socioeconomic uprisings. Some years later, Harvard University researchers began developing ideas linking the analysis of social issues with organizational strategy (Ackerman, 1975; Ackerman & Bauer, 1976). From
this, researchers began formulating prescriptive ideas that would help organizations become more socially responsible.

Since its inception, corporate social responsibility has evolved to be called many things including corporate social responsiveness (Ackerman, 1975; Sethi, 1975), corporate social performance (Caroll, 1979), corporate governance (Jones, 1980), and corporate accountability (Zadeck, Pruzan, & Evans, 1997). Nonetheless, Carroll (1979) explained that there were three responsibilities that organizations must make a part of their mission. These are: (1) they must define their economic, ethical, discretionary, and legal responsibilities to their stakeholders; (2) they must identify any social issues in which management must make a decision on; and (3) they must develop a philosophy of how they respond to such societal issues. Recently, scholars have found that societal advances (i.e., technological innovation) (Tang, Gallagher, & Bie, 2015) and prosocial behaviors (i.e., charitable giving) (Chernev & Blair, 2015) have shown that organizations that are socially aware find success in both ethical responsibility and overall growth.

Professional sports organizations are not considered immune to this expectation. Consequently, it has been suggested that professional sports organizations should become more responsible corporate citizens (Alonso & O'Shea, 2012). In illustrating the significance of sport and physical activity in enhancing some forms of social capital, Sandford, Armour, and Warmington (2006) explained that “given the right circumstances” (p. 265), programs that include physical activity can contribute toward the pro-social development of individuals from underrepresented communities. Additionally, Andrews and Andrews (2003) illustrated that sport can be a key factor in the rehabilitation of underrepresented communities, as part of a more holistic process.
It was explained earlier in this chapter that one way in which organizations could be ethically responsible to their stakeholders is to communicate and engage in establishing shared values. One way in which organizations can achieve this is by helping stakeholders establish an identity with them. The next section will focus on identity development and how it pertains to individuals developing this with sports organizations.

**Organizations and stakeholder identification.** Social Identity Theory is a theory that allows for investigating identity with an organization. Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) described this theoretical framework as one that predicts certain interpersonal and intergroup behaviors by how group differences are perceived. They formally introduced Social Identity Theory as a theory that describes three distinct ways in which individuals are categorized into ingroups and outgroups: biases, prejudices, and discrimination.

Although Wann (1993, 1999) was one of the first researchers to focus on sports team identification and Social Identity Theory, he cautioned that his research did not include a substantial amount of information from individuals who reside in underrepresented communities. Armstrong (2002) did study race and sports consumption. In this study, she administered Wann's (1995) Sports Motivation Scale with additional cultural affiliation motives to a sample of African-American sports consumers. Through this, she developed the African-American Consumers' Sport Motivation Scale. Armstrong (2002) found that African-American sports consumers valued entertainment over financial gains. She did not discover gender differences in regards to their sports consumption. Although valuable to the understanding of minority sports consumption, Armstrong's study did not focus on how sport organizations can be effective in helping individuals from underrepresented groups become everyday sports consumers, especially in sports where representation from these persons is already scarce.
In their study on sports identification among Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), Brown, Devlin, and Billings (2013) used the Sports Communication Theory, which is a subset of Social Identity Theory and the Team Identification-Social Psychological Health Model, to understand fan identification from the largest growing North American Sport. The results of their study showed that gender, age, and sensation seeking were significant predictors of future UFC consumption. Specifically, Brown et al. found that fans who were male, younger, and higher sensation-seeking had higher fan identification.

In understanding how sport organizations share values with stakeholders, Burns (2013) conducted a case study on how the New Orleans Saints 2009 Superbowl winning season affected the identity of individuals who still resided in the city after Hurricane Katrina. In this study, Burns content analyzed over 1,800 newspaper articles that reflected the thoughts of persons living in the city. She found that many New Orleans residents positively identified with the team because the Saints Superbowl victory brought about a sense of pride to the city after the destruction of Hurricane Katrina.

These studies help provide an understanding of how sports organizations recognize the need to engage stakeholders from communities that are often overlooked. Still, many scholars explain that, although not impossible, using sports to engage communities remains challenging (Saaij, 2009). The next section focuses on the importance of interorganizational communication.

**Interorganizational Communication**

Doerfel (2008) defined interorganizational communication as the emphasizing of relationships that organizations establish outside of the organization as a way to develop constituents. Doerfel believed that traditionally, communication scholars focused on the dissemination of organizational messages while economists and sociologists focused on the
context. Doerfel argued that interorganizational communication requires that scholars should consider how organizations influence and are influenced by various factors (e.g., societal issues, organizational power shifts, market share).

Doerfel (2008) explained that interorganizational communication is a necessary component of stakeholder engagement and should be used every time an organization is working to build a relationship with its stakeholders. In their efforts to understand how interorganizational communication affected community engagement, Doerfel, Lai, and Chewing (2010) examined the communication efforts of local businesses to their community stakeholders after the Hurricane Katrina disaster in New Orleans. While continuing as a longitudinal study, the authors discovered that communication differed in the particular phases of recovery during the aftermath: personal emergency, professional emergency, transition, and rebuilding. Although Doerfel et al. did not recognize interorganizational communication efforts until the transition phase, they discovered that this level of communication became consistent until the rebuilding phase. In other words, businesses worked to communicatively engage with the community through establishing shared values.

In her critique of interorganizational communication and community engagement, Dempsey (2010) explained that organizations should gain a critical understanding of the communities and the representatives of these spaces. Further, she explained that when understanding this level of communication, one should not discard the politics that could influence the process, albeit positive or negative.

Although Doerfel and others have established the importance of interorganizational communication as a function of stakeholder development, they have not yet examined the impact interorganizational communication has on developing stakeholder relationships among
professional sports organizations. In a content analysis of articles discussing Stakeholder Theory and its relevance for influencing communities, Laplume, Sonpar, and Litz (2008) recommended that more empirical research should be conducted to better understand the concepts of the theory beyond the traditional research regarding organizational bottom line and profits.

**Rationale**

Agymang (2014) examined stakeholder engagement as “the first to discuss stakeholder engagement among professional athletes, the notion of athlete citizenship, and how these can produce strategic benefits” (p. 26). Still, there is a dearth of literature on how the stakeholder approach is used to examine the promotion of diversity and inclusion within MLB. In this dissertation, I attempted to answer this call, particularly in the sport and interorganizational communication context.

The focus of this dissertation focused on Major League Baseball (MLB) because this organization has established efforts for engaging individuals from diverse communities, but is still failing in their efforts of diversity and inclusion from an external stakeholder perspective. In 1989, MLB implemented programs (e.g., Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities, Urban Youth Academy) to help diversify their team roster and fan base. Despite these efforts, MLB is still facing the issue that team rosters and fan bases are majority white. Some scholars have examined MLB’s Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) program. For example, Kihl, Babiak, and Tainsky’s (2014) study regarding the corporate community involvement initiative of one team's program showed that there are some major issues with regards to the dissemination of information between the organization and the community. These include: (1) the inconsistencies in the agreements made between the RBI programs and community partners, (2) the lack of support from community members, (3) the inconsistent communication efforts between MLB
and the community, and (4) the ineffective marketing of services between MLB and the community.

Stodoiska, Sharaievska, Tainsky, and Ryan (2014) examined the Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities program to determine what factors influenced youth participation. They discovered that organized sports participation among minority youth should be considered as an outcome of a long process involving factors at the individual, family, and community levels. These factors can include the desire for youth to have a father figure and to stay out of trouble during the summer months.

Although this scholarship has forwarded some of the benefits of these outreach programs, they have not specifically focused on the lack of diversity in MLB's fans. Also, these studies have focused only on one MLB team. In gaining a more in-depth understanding of the MLB community outreach efforts, one should investigate numerous teams' efforts to increase participation of diverse populations. Doing this could assist in creating the necessary steps in increasing diversity among fan bases. Therefore, this dissertation examined MLB’s outreach programs to determine its impact on developing future talent, creating a more diverse fan base, and improving underserved communities.

The two Major League Baseball (MLB) programs that are being analyzed in this dissertation are the Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) and Urban Youth Academy (UYA). According to the MLB community website, the RBI program's outreach mission has five distinct purposes. These are to: "Increase the participation and interest in baseball and softball among underserved youth, encourage academic participation and achievement, increase the number of talented athletes prepared to play in college and minor leagues, promote greater inclusion of minorities into the mainstream of the game, and teach the value of teamwork" (MLB.org,
Since its inception, the RBI has had nearly 300,000 participants in more than 200 cities worldwide. Along with the overall mission of diversity and inclusion within MLB, the RBI program is also focused on developing educational and life skills to youth participants and their families.

The RBI program was created by John Young, a former MLB player and talent scout. He saw a need to help inner city youth in South Central Los Angeles stay out of trouble and become responsible young men and women. The front office of MLB endorsed this pilot program and financially supported it. Although initial participation was low, 180 youth eventually participated in the program. It became so popular that in 1991, MLB decided to implement this program on a permanent basis by encouraging all 30 MLB teams to participate.

Since this time, Major League Baseball has invested over $30 million dollars in grants and other resources to sustain the RBI programs. Also, MLB has partnered with many organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Club of America) to aide in the programs growth. Also, several MLB executives have served as the director of this program on an interim basis to lead its development. In 2008, MLB named David James as the permanent director of the RBI program. Since his tenure, the RBI program has not only provided athletic opportunities for inner city youth, but it has provided educational opportunities as well. The RBI program offers scholarships to participants who plan on going to college. In addition to this, the program provides mentoring, tutoring, and life skills training through various educational programs that have partnered with MLB (e.g., Partnership for a Drug-Free America). Recognizing that the RBI program is only a summer program (during the months of May to August), MLB developed the UYA to supplement the RBI program.
The UYA is a non-profit organization formulated by MLB in 2006. The organization was launched to provide year-round baseball and softball instruction to urban youth. Also, the organization was established to improve the lives of individuals living in surrounding communities. Through this organization, MLB has established four primary processes of their Urban Initiatives. These are: "To grow the games of baseball and softball while cultivating diversity in all aspects of the game, to make meaningful contributions to the development of urban communities, to provide safe and organized recreational activities for urban youth, and to prepare urban high school players for college and professional baseball/softball programs" (MLB.org, 2016).

Given this, the following questions were forwarded for study one:

RQ1: What are the specific programs that are operated under Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities/Urban Youth Academies?
RQ2: Why were these programs launched?
RQ3: How does Major League Baseball determine: a.) the success of the programs? B.) the measurement of success?
RQ4: What challenges does Major League Baseball face in communicating and developing relationships with inner city communities?

In order to examine the individuals perceptions of MLB diversity outreach, four hypotheses were also forwarded for study two:

H1: An individual’s perceptions of Major League Baseball diversity community outreach efforts will be positively associated with one’s loyalty to the team.
H2: An individual’s perceptions of Major League Baseball diversity community outreach efforts will be positively associated with one’s awareness of the Reviving
Baseball in Inner Cities programs.

H3: An individual’s perceptions of Major League Baseball community outreach efforts will be positively associated with one’s perceptions of MLB image.

H4: An individual’s perceptions Major League Baseball community outreach efforts will be positively associated with one’s identification with the team.
CHAPTER II

Methods

This dissertation explored what MLB organizations currently do to engage and develop relationships with a particular group of stakeholders, specifically African-American fans/potential fans. In Study 1, representatives of MLB teams were interviewed to learn about their teams’ efforts and future plans involving the African-American fans/potential fans and community initiatives. In Study 2, stakeholders, (i.e., African-American fans/potential fans) completed a brief questionnaire that addressed their views of the relationship between their local MLB team and the African-American community.

Participants

_Study one._ A proposal was emailed to the Front Office of Major League Baseball that discussed conducting research on the effectiveness of their RBI and UYA programs (See Appendix A). Upon review of the proposal, the MLB Senior Director of Youth Programs approved the study (See Appendix B). The Senior Director appointed his Coordinator of Youth Programs as the contact person throughout the duration of the study process. Permission was then given by the Coordinator to conduct the study. The Coordinator then introduced the researcher in an email to all 30 RBI/UYA program managers (See Appendix C). The email explained the purpose of the study and asked RBI/UYA program managers if they would be willing to participate in the study. Once introductions were made, the researcher contacted the program managers to set up interview times.

The participants used in this study were fourteen (\(N = 14\)) Major League Baseball RBI/UYA program managers. Of these program managers, 11 were male and 3 were female. These program managers represent 14 of the 30 Major League Baseball teams. These teams were
the: Los Angeles Dodgers, San Francisco Giants, Miami Marlins, New York Mets, Tampa Bay Rays, Washington Nationals, Houston Astros, Cincinnati Reds, Philadelphia Phillies, Toronto Blue Jays, Detroit Tigers, Milwaukee Brewers, and Minnesota Twins. However, for confidentiality purposes, each program manager, the team they are associated with, and the city in which the team is located was given a pseudonym in the results section. All 30 MLB teams were emailed an invitation to participate in the interview and were later sent a second email for a request to participate. However, these 14 coordinators were the only willing participants. Upon completion of the audio recorded videos, three of the recordings did not have sound. The three program managers who had the audio issues were emailed again to reschedule another interview. However, they were not available for second interviews. Thus, the final total of participants was 11. The years in which they worked in their specific roles range from 5 to 20 years. The program managers explained that there were two specific types of affiliated programs: Team Affiliated Programs and Boys and Girls Club.

**Team affiliated programs.** Team Affiliated Programs are RBI and UYA programs that are directly affiliated with a given Major League Baseball Team. These programs are housed within the headquarters of a Major League Baseball team. They receive full support (e.g., free equipment, travel funding, field trips) from the team and are usually operated under the team’s non-profit department. Within the Team Affiliated Programs, the person in charge is called either the Director of Youth Baseball Operations or the Executive Director of the Baseball Community Fund.

**Boys and girls club affiliated programs.** Boys and Girls Club Affiliated programs are affiliated with a Major League Baseball team through name only. The program itself is housed in a local Boys and Girls Club organization and it usually has several partner organizations (i.e.,
city parks and recreation department, mayor’s office, other non-profit agencies) within the community that supports the program. Within the Boys and Girls Club Affiliated programs, the person in charge is called either the Executive Director or the Coordinator of Youth Sports Programs. These partnerships expand on the understanding of relationships that are built on interorganizational communication. Doerfel (2008) described interorganizational communication as the relationships that organizations develop with outside constituents in order to meet a common goal. With this understanding, the Boys and Girls Club Affiliated programs and their partners share an interorganizational relationship with MLB in order to eradicate lack of diversity issues.

**Study two.** Forty-six (N = 46) participants completed the questionnaire for study two (See Appendix E). They were solicited from the MLB team contacts and/or city programs in which they partner with. Of the 46 participants, 23 were black, 12 were Hispanic, 10 were white, and 1 was Asian. Additionally, 27 were male and 19 were female. As far as team affiliation, 21 came from the Los Angeles Dodgers, 8 came from the Cincinnati Reds, 5 came from the Houston Astros, 4 came from the Detroit Tigers, 3 came from the Milwaukee Brewers, 2 came from the Colorado Rockies, 2 came from the Toronto Blue Jays, and 1 came from the Arizona Diamondbacks. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 55. In regards to game attendance in the last year, 47.8% said they attended 2 to 5 games, 32.6% said they attended 6 or more, 10.9% said they attended 1 game, and 8.7% said they did not attend a game. When asked about their fandom, participants were given a number between 0 (not a fan) to 10 (avid fan). The mean participants’ fandom score was 9.46 (SD = 2.10). Participants completed a questionnaire via Qualtrics asking questions involving their general knowledge of the outreach programs, their fandom, and basic demographic information. The measures in study two are described below.
Measures

Organization-public relationship. To determine individuals’ perceptions of MLB’s outreach efforts, participants completed a three-item Likert type scale adapted from Bruning and Galloway’s (2003) Organization – Public Relationships Scale. Response options ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The statements included in this scale were: I think that the Pirates program actively plays a role in the lives of the communities it serves. I think that the Pirates organization strives to improve the communities in which I live. I believe that the Pirates organization actively plays a role in the lives of the communities it serves. Bruning and Galloway’s original study regarding this scale showed strong reliability ($\alpha = .87$). For this study, the mean for this scale was 12.46, the standard deviation was 3.35, and the Cronbach’s alpha was .97. Additionally, the scores ranged from 3 to 15.

Psychological commitment to team. To determine an individual’s commitment and loyalty to one’s team, participants completed a three-item Likert type scale adapted from Mahony, Madrigal, and Howard’s (2000) Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) scale. Response options ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The statements included in this scale were: Being a fan of the Pirates is important to me. Nothing could change my loyalty to the Pirates. I am committed fan to the Pirates. The mean for this scale was 12.17, the standard deviation was 3.05, and the Cronbach’s alpha was .93. Additionally, the scores ranged from 3 to 15.

Social responsiveness. To determine how individuals’ perceived the social responsiveness of MLB outreach programs, they completed a three-item Likert type scale adapted from Sartore-Baldwin and Walker’s (2011) Social Responsiveness Scale. The scale has four items but it was determined that one was not appropriate for the study. Response options
ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The statements included in this scale were: I am aware of MLB’s Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities/Urban Youth Academy programs. Major League Baseball’s Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities/Urban Youth Academy programs are successful. I am unfamiliar with MLB’s Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities/Urban Youth Academy programs. Satore-Baldwin and Walker’s original study for this scale showed strong reliability ($\alpha = .85$). For this study, the mean for this scale was 13.22, the standard deviation was 2.47, and the Cronbach’s alpha was .70. Additionally, the scores ranged from 6 to 15.

**MLB image.** To determine individuals’ perceptions of MLB image, they completed a three-item Likert type scale adapted from the Sartore-Baldwin and Walker’s (2011) NASCAR Image scale. Response options ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The statements included in this scale were: I have a good impression of the Pirates organization. In my opinion, the Pirates organization has a good image in the minds of the African-American community. I believe that the Pirates organization has a better image than other organizations in the community. Satore-Baldwin and Walker’s original study for this scale showed strong reliability ($\alpha = .78$). The mean for this scale was 12.28, the standard deviation was 3.29, and the Cronbach’s alpha was .92. Additionally, the scores ranged from 3 to 15.

**MLB identification.** To determine individuals’ identification towards MLB, they completed a three-item Likert type scale adapted from the Sartore-Baldwin and Walker’s (2011) NASCAR Identification scale. Response options ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The statements included in this scale are: I feel a sense of affiliation with the Pirates organization rather than just being a fan. When someone criticizes the Pirates, it feels like a personal insult. I feel that the successes of the Pirates are my successes. Satore-Baldwin and Walker’s original study for this scale showed strong reliability ($\alpha = .87$). For this study, the mean
for this scale was 9.76, the standard deviation was 3.18, and the Cronbach’s alpha was .77. Additionally, the scores ranged from 3 to 15.

**Open-ended.** Along with the aforementioned measures, individuals were asked some open-ended questions. These questions were: What has the Pirates organization done in the past to build a relationship with the African-American community? What do you think the Pirates organization could do to get the African-American community in your area more interested in Major League Baseball?

**Procedure**

**Study one.** Semi-structured interviews via Skype were conducted with 11 RBI program managers associated with MLB teams. Of these 11 RBI program managers, three (n = 3) of them also served as Urban Youth Academy program managers. A structured interview guide was used throughout the interview process (See Appendix D). Participants were given instructions as to how the interview process would commence. They were also told that they can choose not to answer any question and that their information would be confidential. The interviews were recorded and ranged between 17 minutes to 51 minutes.

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed using Express Scribe transcription software. Member checking was used to verify the data. The transcriptions were then entered into NVivo 11 for analysis. Specifically, text search, word frequencies, and coding matrices were used within the NVivo 11 software to examine the outreach efforts of MLB. Major League Baseball, their 30 teams, and their community outreach constituents have been made aware that data involved in this study will be reported in this dissertation and that it could be used for subsequent studies. Interviews were conducted for this study using Kvale and Brinkmann’s
Thematizing. After consulting with executives in the Major League Baseball Front Office, a set of questions were constructed in order to determine what Major League Baseball is doing to address the lack of diversity within the game of baseball. These questions were: What are the specific programs that are operated under Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities? Why were these programs launched? How do these teams define the success of the programs? What are the biggest challenges in getting black people involved in the game of baseball? For each question, probing questions were asked to gain a more in-depth understanding. The questions were given specific codes: MLB specific programs, program launch, success of programs, and black people involvement in MLB.

Designing. Major League Baseball executives expressed that once I begin the interview process, I would only be allowed to conduct the interviews within a limited amount of time in order to respect the time of individual RBI/UYA program managers. Therefore, the interview guide was created using four main questions with structured probing questions. This guide helped to keep the interview questions consistent across all teams.

Interviewing. The front office of MLB agreed for interviews to be 30 minutes in length but no more than one hour. The interviews were conducted via Skype between January 2016 and February 2016. These were the times in which team RBI/UYA program managers were free before spring training began for MLB teams. Each interview was audio recorded.

Transcribing and verifying. Once the interviews were completed, the audio files were uploaded into Express Scribe transcription software to be transcribed. Each team was individually transcribed and the final document included 47 pages of notes. To verify the validity
and reliability of the data, the participants were able to view their transcribed audio for errors in their language. This method is called member checking. Each RBI/UYA program manager reported that the words from the transcriptions were accurate.

Analyzing. The transcribed data was entered into NVivo 11 for analysis. NVivo 11 is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CASDAQ) tool in which unstructured or qualitative data (i.e., interviews, web content, open-ended survey responses) can be entered into the software to organize and analyze the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). NVivo 11 has been designed to help qualitative researchers make connections and find themes within their research. However, NVivo does not automatically create codes and search for themes, it only assists the research in this endeavor. Consequently, an emergent thematic analysis was conducted for this study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With this type of analysis, the researcher must familiarize themselves with the data, code the data, search for themes, review the themes, define/name the themes, and create a compelling story with the themes that emerged.

Once the 47-page transcription was uploaded into NVivo 11, nodes were created for each question forwarded for study one. Nodes are the specific code folders used by NVivo 11 to organize unstructured data. For the purposes of this study, codes and nodes are used interchangeably. These nodes were: MLB specific programs, program launch, success of programs, and African-American involvement in MLB. Once each code was identified, the transcription notes that addressed each question was dragged and dropped into the specific node folder. After each transcription was placed in the node folder, text frequencies and word queries were conducted to determine if there were themes that emerged from the data. First, the researcher identified themes that emerged from the data. Second, two assistants trained by the researcher helped to review the themes to determine if the data works to tell a compelling story.
Lastly, the researcher defined and named themes in order to help develop the story from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
Figure 1

Specific Programs
Figure 2

Program Launch
Figure 3

Success of Programs
Figure 4

African-American Involvement in Major League Baseball
**Reporting.** All data collected from the transcription is reported in the study one results section of the dissertation.

**Study two.** Once approval was given from the MLB front office to conduct this study (See Appendix B), Individuals over the age of 18 completed an online questionnaire via Qualtrics regarding their perceptions of the RBI program. These individuals were the parents of youth who participated in both the RBI and UYA programs. The RBI program managers who participated in the interviews agreed to distribute the questionnaires through the teams’ listservs and partner organization listservs. However, the program managers cautioned that many individuals throughout their communities are hard to reach and that they could not promise responses from individuals. Only the Los Angeles Dodgers provided incentives in order for people to complete the questionnaire.

Once the online questionnaire was distributed via the listservs, the researcher waited two weeks for the preferred amount of participants to complete the questionnaire. After two weeks, the researcher sent another email to program managers asking them to send a reminder to their listservs requesting to complete the questionnaire. This process was repeated for one month until a cut off time was administered so that the data could be analyzed. After the online questionnaires were closed, a total of 46 participants completed the questionnaires.
CHAPTER III

Results

The purpose of this dissertation was to gain an understanding of the youth programs MLB has in place to increase the African-American communities’ involvement and interest in baseball. Study one was conducted to answer four research questions: What are the specific programs that are operated under the RBI? Why were these programs launched? How do these teams define the success of the programs? What are the biggest challenges in getting African-Americans involved in the game of baseball? Eleven RBI and UYA program managers were interviewed to gain insight into the research questions that were posed. For study two, individuals involved in the RBI/UYA programs completed a questionnaire that focused on their perceptions of MLB’s diversity outreach efforts. Based on prior research that focused on diversity efforts of professional sports teams, four hypotheses were posited: Individuals’ perceptions of MLB’s diversity outreach efforts will be positively associated with their commitment to the team. Individuals’ perceptions of MLB’s diversity outreach efforts will be positively associated with their perceptions of the MLB’s image. Individuals’ perceptions of Major League Baseball’s diversity outreach efforts will be positively associated with their identification to the team. Individuals’ perceptions of MLB’s diversity outreach efforts will be positively associated with their perceptions of MLB’s social responsiveness.

Study One

Research question one: RBI/UYA programs. When asked what specific programs are operated under RBI, the program managers stated that the RBI consists of three programs: Junior RBI, RBI, and RBI clinics. With regards to the Junior RBI program, Joseph, a program manager for a team in the southwest region of the U.S. stated that “the Junior RBI programs that we have
are [for] kids age 5 to 12.” Of the three programs operated under RBI, it is the Junior RBI that usually has the most number of participants. Because of the high number of participants in the Junior RBI, this program is mostly used as a feeder program for RBI. For instance, Hector, the program manager for a team in the southeast region of the U.S. stated that, “[The Junior RBI is] a feeder program for RBI.” Still, other program managers would like to see continued success with the program. For example, Walter, program manager for an MLB team in the Midwest said, “We want to grow the Junior RBI program.” For these RBI managers, the Junior RBI program is an important component to getting African-American youth involved and interested in baseball.

Program managers describe RBI as MLB’s flagship program. According to Walter, a program manager from an MLB team in the Midwest, the RBI “fall[s] under the umbrella of Major League Baseball’s RBI program”. It is MLB’s “signature program” that is operated for youth ages 13 to 18, explained Nathan, a program manager for a team in the Midwest region of the U.S. The main purpose of the RBI is to provide opportunities for youth from underserved communities to become involved and interested in baseball. Primarily, these opportunities include playing in regional baseball and softball tournaments, which ultimately lead to the RBI world series; additionally, some program managers have stated that RBI programs also offer educational scholarships that can be as much as $5000 for youth to attend college. Although program managers see less attendance in the RBI program than the Junior RBI program, they have expressed much pride in these programs. For instance, Jessie, a program manager for an MLB team on the east coast said, “We also have our RBI program, which I am very proud of.”

The third program under the RBI umbrella is the RBI clinic programs, which are workshops and seminars that program managers use to help youth understand the game of baseball. Hector stated, “I operate a clinic series that focuses on providing youth the educational
tools necessary to understand the game of baseball.” Furthermore, Walter described what he does in his RBI clinic program,

One of the things we do here at the clinic is a baseball fundamentals clinic. We work to have a softball fundamentals clinic. So, we have 60 youth in each program and have them in breakout sessions. In two of the break out sessions, we teach them baseball and softball skills.

For some program managers, they described that the clinics help to establish cohesiveness among the youth. For instance, Nathan explained, “We teach them teamwork, working with others, and other responsibilities.” Therefore, while the RBI focuses on youth playing the game of baseball, the RBI clinic is solely focused on improving youths’ skills and abilities for playing the game of baseball.

With regards to the UYA, there are two types of programs: educational programs and life skills programs. For some UYA program managers, their main goal is to provide programs to help the youth beyond baseball. Joseph explained that, “We realize that to get kids to the next level it takes a lot more than skills on the field. We had to have them excel academically, as well as participate in this program.” The UYA offers educational programs such as tutoring for youth in junior high and high school to help them excel academically. Along with excelling academically, some program managers go beyond junior high and high school academics to help youth to become prepared for college. For example, Nathan said, “We offer programs like ACT practice test.” We [also have] a college readiness expert come in for two of the last three years to help the kids work the college recruiting process.” Jessie added that,

With the indoor facility [of the Urban Youth Academy], we have educational programs so that we can get these high school kids more set up for them to go to college. They can
study their ACT’s and SAT’s. Also we can educate many of the African-American kids on the Negro Leagues. We are in the middle of creating a curriculum to get kids in a classroom setting and teach them other stuff that you probably don’t get to learn in school. It doesn’t have to do with baseball, it will help the African-Americans understand their history and the history of baseball.

The UYA life skills programs were established to help youth learn basic fundamentals skills that will assist them in surviving in life beyond baseball and to help them become more responsible citizens. Financial literacy was mentioned by many of the program managers as something that was important for the youth to learn. Nathan said, “With our UYA program, we have a financial planning seminar to try to help youth better understand how they need to prepare for a financial understanding for their future.” Another program manager said, “We are really working to give baseball the vehicle to teach life skills and make great citizens.” This program also works to minimize juvenile delinquency. Chris, a program manager for a MLB on the west coast explained that, “The Urban Youth Academy is a violence, gang, and drug prevention program.” Overall, the UYA extends beyond youths’ interest in baseball to educationally enrich them and help them to develop life skills.

**Research question two: Program launch.** Throughout the interviews, the program managers described why these specific RBI and UYA programs were launched. Across all accounts, two specific themes emerged, with regards to RBI programs: “reach out to the African-American community” and “to teach all kids about how to play baseball.” With regards to the UYA programs, two themes also emerged: “reach out to the African-American community” and “to offer education/life skills programs.”

When it comes to RBI’s outreach efforts to the African-American community, program
managers described MLB as lagging behind, but now they are working to improve upon their outreach efforts. In regards to MLB’s overall goal, Jessie explained that they “wanted to introduce the sport to the inner city community.” Additionally, David, a program manager from a Boys and Girls club in the east coast said that, “our program started because we were having decreased participation in Major League Baseball.” Some program managers expressed their concern about MLB’s lack of focus within these communities. For instance, Sarah, a program manager for an MLB team in the southeast region of the U.S. explained that, “[MLB] was not inner city focused, whereas we are able to see more African-American participants in RBI now because we are inner city focused.” Additionally, some program managers explained that the programs were launched because most inner city youth are exposed to baseball later in life. For example, Joseph explained that,

We find that most [black] kids in the inner cities don’t get into Major League Baseball until they go to Division I college. So I felt that [RBI] is something that I could jump into and be a part of. I am very excited about what we have done.

Overall, MLB has become more focused on reaching out to African-American youth over the last three decades. Moreover, their main goal is to reach out to the youth at an earlier age.

In addition to the specific focus of reaching out to African-American youth, RBI also has a broader goal of teaching the game of baseball in a way that helps youth learn to love it. Some program managers went on to say that African-American youth would become more involved if they knew how to play the game. For example, Joseph explained that, “If they [African-American youth] increase their baseball IQ, they would know what baseball is about. I think, you know, learning the game, I think that will help you.” However, according to some program managers it takes a while for youth to learn the game of baseball. For instance, Tim, a program
manager for an MLB team in North America explained that, “Through the course of several weeks and baseball experiences, along with other camp experiences, they learn to play the sport.” For many program managers then, they expressed that the overall concern is that the length of time it takes to learn the basics of baseball is one of the reasons they feel African-American youth are not involved in the game.

Reaching out to the African-American community is also a focus of the UYA programs. Moreover, program managers explained that having African-American youth involved in UYA programs would help them in their overall development. For example, Nathan said,

I see us increasing our reach. I see us getting to some goals of having broader involvement. I think for the Urban Youth Academy. We are poised to make things better [for African-American youth]. We want the youth to grow and go to college. We believe having our programs and finding more role models for the youth with will aid in improving in their whole area of development.

Additionally, Jessie said that, “With our [UYA] program, we feel that we are able to have more exposure with city kids. We can give them more opportunities to help them develop.” Given this, program managers expressed that UYA programs are beneficial in that they provide a sustainable atmosphere for youth to grow and become productive citizens.

In addition to reaching out to African-American youth, program managers wanted to provide education enrichment and life skills through the UYA program. Natasha, a UYA program manager for an MLB team on the west coast explained that, “Financial literacy and health awareness are available. This season [2016] we are working on the existing resources and we are adding a college support/literacy program.” Further, some program managers explained that the UYA program can help the youth stay out of trouble and be productive citizens. For
instance, Joseph explained that, “We can make the kids better citizens. We want the kids to do well in school and not get in trouble.” Thus, according to the program managers, the primary purpose of the UYA is not focused on learning how to play the game of baseball, but to help youth put education first while developing them to be responsible citizens.

**Research question three: Program success.** Research question three dealt with how MLB assessed the success of their RBI and UYA programs. Their responses were categorized into seven themes. These themes were: (a) participation, (b) attendance/retention, (c) no definition at all, (d) feedback from stakeholders, (e) long-term involvement, (f) increase in UYA activities, and (g) increase in non-white male participation. Program managers expressed that participation is vital for the success of the programs. In fact, they expressed that their programs would be more impactful if they saw an increase in the number of participants. For example, Nathan explained that, “We want to continue to grow. We want to make our program more impactful and this can be done through expanding on the number of people we have playing. We want to significantly increase the base of our program.” Some program managers have specified a particular number of participants as their definition of success. For instance, Natasha said that, “If we can get 10,000 youth over a 4 to 5-year period to participate, then this is first and foremost a success.” Moreover, program managers felt that increased participation from African-American youth is one of the best determinants of the success of their diversity outreach programs.

Along with participation, program managers expressed that attendance and retention are a measure of the success of the programs. For example, Jessie said that, “I define success in attendance in everything I do. The one thing in running these programs with kids is trying to get them out there. For us, to get the kids out to attend is success in itself.” Some program managers placed a numeric value on what they perceived to be success when it came to attendance. For
instance, Tim said that, “We try to keep a 95% attendance rate.” In addition to this, program managers explained that the dropout rate among youth age 13 to 18 is high. Natasha said that one of her top goals is to “reduce the dropout rate from their players.” Given what the program managers have stated, their top goal is to determine what hinders youth from attending these programs.

Other program managers explained that they have no formal measure of success with regards to these endeavors and efforts. For example, Jessie said that “There is no formal way of measuring success.” Additionally, Hector said that, “One thing that we try to do is try to find ways to quantify [success]. We have not figured out the best method to do that.” Also, Hector expressed the concern of not being able to measure the success of programs that go beyond baseball. He explained that, “We don’t have hard quantifiable numbers such as graduation rates, teen pregnancy rates, etc.” Therefore, most program managers expressed that measuring success, while a priority, has not been defined.

Several program managers stated that feedback from stakeholders was one of the best ways they measured the success of the programs. For example, Natasha said that, “We have developed the pre-season and post-season surveys to measure this.” Additionally, Tim said that he partners with several outside agencies including the community housing authority and the boys and girls club in developing both qualitative and quantitative projects to measure success. Further, he explained that, “We are working to bring in all of the methodologies from our partners to see what we have done to now create a centralized system for all of our reporting.” Some program managers even work with universities to gain feedback from stakeholders. For example, Chris explained that, “We work with Angel State University to measure what kid’s kind of learned through each [program] lesson.” Natasha added that, “We have partnered with
Sun City University’s [School of] Social Work…who has helped us implement various metrics and measurements. Also they helped us monitor, grow, and evaluate the tools we used to do surveys…to obviously improve the program.” With these measurements in place, these programs managers are working to establish how to best improve their communities.

Another definition of success for program managers is for African-American youth to make a long-term investment into the game of baseball. For Jessie, he wants them to “use those skills learned [in baseball and] to carry them through high school and college.” Additionally, Hector added that, “We want to make sure that they have the grades to make sure a scout can talk to them. We don’t want the scout to waste their time and the kids to lose out on playing college baseball. Some program managers expressed that they wanted the long-term investment to go further than college. For instance, Sarah explained that, “I would like to see the youth go to HBCU’s [Historically Black Colleges and Universities] and come back and give back into the program.” For these program managers, they expressed that these long-term investments are imperative in the future involvement of African-American youth.

Some program managers expressed that an increase in UYA activities is a sign of success. Some program managers have envisioned seeing all MLB teams establishing a UYA program. For example, Joseph said that, “I see every MLB team having an [Urban Youth] Academy. It may not happen in my lifetime, but I think that the academy will help baseball grow for many years.” Some program managers expressed that an Urban Youth Academy is one of their next major programs geared towards successfully enticing African-American youth to become involved in the game of baseball. For example, Chris explained that,

Our last big initiative is our Urban Youth Academy. We are still in the midst of getting it off of the ground. It kind of involves a long process. We are doing what we can to
increase involvement from African-American youth but we are certainly looking to build. Some program managers are more optimistic about the future of UYA. Nathan added that,

We [The Urban Youth Academy] are poised to make things better. We have some of the better facilities in the region. I think we will see significant growth in our numbers. I really believe we are right around the corner for having significant change and having a big expansion. At the academy, I see us having an impact, broader range, more people in general.

Given this, program managers have expressed that the UYA programs will become the premiere programs that work to increase the number of African-American youth who are involved in the game of baseball.

Program managers also expressed that an increase in non-white male participation is a definition of success. The program managers are optimistic about the future of minority youth involvement. For example, Natasha said that, “I do think that there will be an increase in this realm with under-resourced Latino and Black youth. I think that they will come along and eventually become life-long fans through our programs.” Additionally, some program managers explained that former African-American MLB players were tired of seeing non-black kids play the game of baseball. For example, Walter added that, “They [former African-American MLB players] were the ones who actually started the [RBI] program. Certainly, they were fond of having Asian and Latino kids play, but they were especially interested in having black kids play.” Further, some program managers expressed that they wanted African-American youth participation to go beyond the playing field. For example, Joseph said that “We need to make them [African-American youth] fans of the game. I think making sure they they are involved on the field and eventually, in the front offices are very important.” Therefore, for the program
managers, the overall goal is to increase the number of African-American youth in the game of baseball as players, fans, and front office managers.

Research question four: Challenges and involvement in MLB. Program managers were asked to describe the challenges they face in getting African-American youth more involved in the game of baseball. Five themes emerged from the analysis of the transcripts that describe the challenges of getting more African-Americans involved in the RBI and UYA programs. These themes include (a) support of the family, (b) developing trust with the kids, (c) lack of communication, (d) transient communities, and (e) attractiveness of other sports.

In regards to support of the family, program managers expressed that there needs to be more involvement from African-American parents within the game of baseball. Some program managers specifically talked about parental involvement as being a detriment to increased involvement from African-American youth. For example, Matthew, a program manager and former MLB player for a team in the southeast region of the U.S. explained that “Parents’ involvement is big to the kids getting to practice. If parents don’t get involved, then the membership stays the same.” Another program manager expressed that parents lack of knowledge keeps the youth from becoming involved. Specifically, Sarah said that, “The biggest challenges is when parents don’t know. So it is just a matter of educating the parents first. So once you educate them, the kids will follow.” One program manager explained that one way parents can become involved is helping with transporting the youth to and from the programs. For example, Nathan explained that, “One of our major problem areas is transportation. Get our participants to and from games and getting our participants to and from the Urban Youth Academy hurts our growth. We need parents help in this situation.” Overall, program managers expressed that parental involvement is key in getting more African-American youth involved in
Developing trust with the youth is another area in which the program managers articulated as a challenge to getting the youth involved. Moreover, they explained that they have made efforts in bringing individuals that the youth can relate to as a strategy to help develop trust between the youth and the program manager. For example, Natasha explained that,

Baseball as a whole is not involved in understanding how to develop [trust] in any of those arenas. However, I do think that the Sunshine City RBI in the black community with our programming and special events are exposing our particular neighborhoods to people who act like them or talk like them.

Some program managers expressed that the development of trust comes through developing a personal relationship with the youth. For example, Jessie said that,

I am more personable with my relationships. I constantly email them, call them personally as well to try to get them. But to them I think they are having a hard time to find a person that has the same commitment to continue to do stuff to help and provide for them.

Some program managers have actually turned to the community for help in their efforts to develop trust. Walter said that, “We have found community leaders who have the trust in the community and are able to partner with those leaders to get the message to the community would be easier. But that has kind of been a challenge.” Walter added that, “trying to tap into the leaders of the community to get across the message has been difficult.” Still, some program managers expressed that these communities have dealt with hardships in the past which causes them not to trust outsiders. For example, Todd explained that, “Unfortunately, there are some negative situations that these communities go through and rightfully so, they are on guard
“Sometimes.” For the program managers, their main focus has been continuing to find the proper channels that help them develop trust within the African-American community.

Effectively communicating with the African-American community has been a challenge that program managers face when promoting the game of baseball. Moreover, they expressed that the gap in technology among their underserved communities is the probable cause. For example, Chris explained that,

One of our challenges in the communities that we serve is the digital divide. This is where families don’t always have access to the internet. So, how do we go about that to help them get that structure so that they do have that?

For these program managers, technological innovations (i.e., the Internet) are utilized as the main source of communication despite their beliefs that the communities in which they serve lack access to it.

Program managers have expressed that another challenge to getting more African-American youth involved in the game of baseball is their transient nature. For example, Walter explained that,

The urban community, overall, is that the challenge is communication. Sometimes it is difficult to get our messages across because it can be our low income, transient community that are not easy to reach because you don’t know where to find them.

They’ll be moving, so trying to send out mail is difficult because we get so many [e-mail] bounce backs.

Additionally, program managers expressed that youth from these low-income communities have issues with remaining stable because of being raised in single parent homes. Chris said that,

One of the challenges is that we have a lot of single parent homes. We have a lot of
homes where parents are working two or three jobs are trying to make ends meet. If the ends don’t meet, then the parents could lose their home.

Thus, program managers’ overall challenge of communicating and developing relationships with African-American youth is that they are hard to reach.

Program managers also expressed that other sports (i.e., football and basketball) are more attractive than baseball to the youth. Specifically, program managers expressed that other sports provide more excitement. For example, Natasha said that, “It’s not that things are negative, but it’s just that football and basketball present themselves as more exciting to them.” Additionally, some program managers expressed that popularity of other sports do not allow the youth to participate in baseball. For instance, Hector said that, “In the south, football is king. You got kids that play football year round and they don’t have the opportunity to play other sports. They don’t let their muscles rest from the beating they take from football.” Also, some program managers expressed that baseball is not a sport marketed to black youth. For instance, Keith said that,

The game of baseball doesn’t represent how our kids play sports. I think if baseball loosens up some of the unwritten rules and allowed players to be themselves and be a part of the game and making it fun, enjoyable, and celebratory then I think our kids will have a love for it.

Given this, the focus of program managers promoting the game of baseball is premised on finding ways to make the game of baseball as attractive as other sports.

Study Two

The means, standard deviations, and internal reliabilities of each scale are reported in Table 1. To explore the hypotheses, Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were conducted. These hypotheses were concerned with whether or not individuals’ perceptions of MLB’s
outreach efforts were positively associated with their psychological commitment to the team, their image of MLB, their team identification, and their perceptions of MLB’s social responsiveness. The hypotheses were supported.

Hypothesis one stated that individuals’ perceptions of MLB’s outreach efforts would be positively associated with their psychological commitment to the team. This hypothesis was supported. There was a strong positive correlation between MLB’s outreach efforts and psychological commitment to the team, $r(46) = .75$, $p < .001$. Individuals who perceived MLB’s outreach efforts to be positive were more likely to be loyal to the team.

Hypothesis two stated that individuals’ perceptions of MLB’s outreach efforts would be positively associated with their image of MLB. This hypothesis was supported. There was a strong positive correlation between MLB’s outreach efforts and image of MLB, $r(46) = .87$, $p < .001$. Individuals who perceived MLB’s outreach efforts to be positive were more likely to perceive the image of MLB as positive.

Hypotheses three stated that individuals’ perceptions of MLB’s outreach efforts would be positively associated with their team identification. This hypothesis was supported. There was a strong positive association between MLB’s outreach efforts and team identification, $r(46) = .70$, $p < .001$. Individuals who perceived the MLB’s outreach efforts to be positive were more likely to identify with the team.

Hypotheses four stated that individuals’ perceptions of MLB outreach efforts would positively associated with their perceptions of MLB’s social responsiveness. This hypothesis was supported. There was a moderate correlation between MLB outreach efforts and MLB social responsiveness, $r(46) = .50$, $p < .001$. Individuals who perceived MLB’s outreach efforts to be positive were more likely to view MLB as socially responsive.
Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for All Scales*

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<td>.73**</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Team Identification</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.77**</td>
<td>.69**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Social Responsiveness</td>
<td>13.22</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.38*</td>
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*Note.* *Correlation is significant at p <.05.* **Correlation is significant at .01.*
CHAPTER IV

Discussion

MLB has led a global effort to increase the level of diversity within the game of baseball. One of their main areas of concern is increasing the number of minority players and increasing their minority fan base. Two programs that MLB uses to address these issues are Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) and the Urban Youth Academy (UYA). The RBI program was established in 1989 and is a summer program that works to address the waning number of underprivileged/low-income youth who play the game of baseball, especially African-American youth (Lapchick & Salas, 2015). The UYA was established in 2006 to compliment the RBI program. Youth participants receive not only year round instruction of the game of baseball under the UYA program, but they also receive educational enrichment and life skills training.

MLB still faces the problem of decreased participation within the game of baseball from individuals who are part these communities. Consequently, a partnership was formed between the researcher and the front office of MLB to address the issue of diversity. As such, the focal point of this dissertation was to investigate diversity in MLB using an organizational communication concept entitled engaged scholarship.

Engaged scholarship is imperative to this dissertation given that it reflects “a growing concern that academic scholarship address pressing social, political, economic, and ecological problems” (Dempsey & Barge, 2014; p. 665). Major League Baseball has recognized the political and socioeconomic issues plaguing their organization, but have yet to find ways to ameliorate the issue. To guide this effort of this engaged scholarship, Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) was used as the theoretical framework. In this final chapter of the dissertation, an explanation of the results for study one and two are discussed. Theoretical and practical
implications, limitations, and future directions are also forwarded.

Study One

Specific programs. Study one examined various aspects of MLB community outreach efforts. Specifically, research questions were asked that focused on the specific programs MLB has in place, why the programs were launched, how successful are these programs, and what can be done to increase involvement from the African-American community. For research question one, it was discovered that all program managers interviewed operated three specific programs under RBI: Junior RBI, RBI, and baseball/softball clinics. In regards to the UYA programs, program managers expressed that they provided educational enrichment programs (i.e., ACT test preparation, SAT test preparation, college readiness preparation) and life skills training (i.e., financial literacy, juvenile delinquency prevention).

Many of the program managers went on to explain that these programs are operated either through a Team Affiliated Program or Boy and Girls Club affiliated program. Team affiliated programs are directly linked to an MLB team where as the Boys and Girls Club Affiliated program maintained the MLB team’s name but was fully operated through a local Boys and Girls Club. Both affiliated programs worked with partners throughout the community to achieve their specific goals. However, there were clear distinctions. The Team Affiliated Programs were self-supported, which helped them run independently without financial support from the front offices of Major League Baseball. But, the Boys and Girls Club Affiliated programs depended upon their relationships with their partners (i.e., parks and recreation department, sport apparel organizations) to maintain their programs.

Regardless of how these programs navigate their partnerships, the development of these relationships and how these organizations communicate with each other to reach a common goal
supports Taylor and Doerfel’s (2003) argument that interorganizational relationships are essential if a given organization’s goal is to enact social transformation. Also, these partnerships have been said to be essential for social problems that are generally too large for organizations to handle on their own (Glowacki-Dudka & Murray, 2015).

In regards to the programs operated under the RBI/UYA umbrella, these interorganizational relationships have helped MLB develop and maintain these programs. The program managers explained that the purpose of the Junior RBI program is to serve as a feeder program for youth aged 5 to 12 to help acclimate them to the game of baseball before they transition to the RBI program. The RBI program itself enhances the skills of 13 to 18 year olds through baseball instruction. The baseball/softball clinics offer workshops on the history of the game, the importance of the game, and how youth can become productive citizens through the game of baseball.

This notion is consistent with Stodolska, Sharaievska, Tainsky, and Ryan’s (2014) work that examined the needs, motivations, and facilitators of youth participating in RBI programs. They discovered that the basic need for youth in participating in these programs was so that they can play the game of baseball. Additionally, motivation for youth becoming involved with the RBI program was so that they could learn more about the game and one day become MLB players. Lastly, the facilitator that enhanced youth involvement within the RBI program was that it taught them about life.

Program launch. Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities programs were launched to introduce the game of baseball to youth from African-American communities and to provide baseball instruction. The UYA programs were also launched to introduce the game of baseball to these communities. But in addition to this, the UYA programs wanted to provide skills to the youth
beyond baseball through educational enrichment and life skills training. Program managers went on to explain that these youths would not have been exposed to the game of baseball if it were not for the RBI and UYA programs. Additionally, they explained that another goal was to keep youth out of trouble.

This notion is consistent with Corporate Social Responsibility literature that examines the ethical and social responsibilities of organizations to a given community (Wartick & Cochran, 1985). Major League Baseball has maintained that its global impact situates them as an entity that must be socially responsible to its constituents (i.e., fans, partners) in order to remain a successful organization. Thus, this research extends the idea forwarded by Cobourn (2014) who explained that sport organizations must consistently examine how and why they engage with target communities. In addition to this, the program managers explained that their programs have grown significantly since their inception. Although the program managers have seen growth, they reported that maintaining their target audience in participating in the programs continues to be a problem area.

Success of programs. Program managers identified several factors as in describing how they measure success. These factors included: the number of youth participating, the attendance/retention of the youth, the feedback received from stakeholders, long-term involvement from the youth, an increase in additional UYA activities, and more participation from non-white male youths. Overall, many of the program managers said that if they could maintain consistency in getting the youth to show up and participate each year, then that would be an area of success for them. However, when managers were asked about how they measured success, many of them explained that there was no formal system in place within their organization to measure success. Program managers went on to explain that even though they
have the programs in place to address various issues within the community, attendance from youth within their target communities has continued to be an issue. Therefore, they explained that youth attendance is necessary before they can make any progress with the programs. For example, one program manager said that “we want to make our program more impactful and see an expansion on the number of people that we have playing.”

In the initial conversation with front office of MLB, it was discovered that each RBI/UYA program operates both independently of each other and independently of the front office of MLB with no formal rules of governance. The only common measure of success is attendance and across the board program managers stated that attendance is low. Thus, there is no formal rule for measuring the success of the programs. As mentioned before, Taylor and Deorfel (2003) explained that interorganizational relationships are important for organizations to achieve success in a common goal. But what the results show is that interorganizational relationships have been viewed as important between MLB and other organizations (e.g., individual cities, parks and recreation programs, various nonprofits) but not necessarily between the front office of MLB and their RBI/UYA program managers.

*Community involvement.* For research question four, it was discovered that getting more parents involved with the programs was the most important way to get more youth involved. Additionally, when program managers were probed in regards to the difficulties of communicating and developing relationships with the African-American community, they explained that these communities were hard to reach and that the game is not relatable to youth. Most parents who live within these communities work multiple jobs and/or lack transportation. Therefore, it is difficult for them to become involved and involve their children in the programs (Blank, Sweeney, & Fuller, 2014). Program managers recognized this and some of
them volunteer to provide transportation for youth to and from scheduled events. For Boys and Girls Club affiliated program managers however, they explained that this caused a strain to an already depleted financial budget. Nonetheless, the program managers went on to say that if they received more parental involvement, it would help the programs become more successful.

In regards to these communities being hard to reach, program managers explained that the individuals from these communities are either transient or do not have access to the internet. Some of the program managers also explained that they worked to maintain relationships with key stakeholders within the community who have the ability to communicate messages from program managers to the community. Lastly, program managers explained that other sports (i.e., football, basketball) present themselves as being more lucrative to the youths’ long term social mobility than baseball.

Therefore, there still remains a gap in relationship building from MLB to their target communities. Despite the inability of developing a relationship with individuals from underserved communities, the results show that MLB has worked to determine how to target key external stakeholders. This provides evidence for the proposition of Stakeholder Theory that states organizations must discover the value of their external stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). In regards to the game not being relatable, program managers explained that youth culture does not find the game of baseball as entertaining as other sports and it is not culturally relevant to today’s youth. This notion extends the literature on the importance of understanding cultural affiliation when it comes to minority involvement within sports (Armstrong, 1998). Additionally, this research supports and extends prior research that explains that entertainment value is an important variable when understanding sport consumption habits of individuals from minority backgrounds (Armstrong, 2008).
Lastly, this research supports and extends the notion of prior research that suggests that other sports such as basketball provide more entertainment value and opportunities of more efficient social mobility than baseball does (Ogden & Hilt, 2003). Considering that individuals within the underserved communities are key stakeholders, it was imperative to gain an understanding of how these individuals perceived these outreach efforts.

**Study Two**

For study two, individuals who have youth that are involved in both the RBI and UYA completed a questionnaire via Qualtrics concerning their perceptions of MLB diversity outreach efforts. Specifically, this research was conducted to examine if these efforts predicted psychological commitment to team, how MLB image was perceived, how individuals identified with the team, and how individuals perceived MLB social responsiveness.

**Psychological commitment to team.** Understanding why individuals develop a psychological commitment to a team has been widely studied (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000; Murrell & Dietz, 1992; Prichard, Havitz, & Howard, 1999). In fact, DeSarbo (2009) explained that commitment to a team (i.e., fan loyalty) is one of the most important variables that sport organizations should strategize for when it comes to building and maintaining fan involvement in sports.

This study supports this notion in that individuals who positively perceived MLB diversity outreach efforts were more likely to develop loyalty to the team. This finding also supports and extends research that reported a dearth of literature between the relationship of involvement and loyalty among sport fans (Bee & Havitz, 2010; Tachis & Tzetsis, 2015). Further, this study supports the need for sport organizations to continue developing measures to understand how and to what extent do fans become loyal to a team.
**Image.** Along with the psychological commitment to the team, individuals’ perceptions of MLB image were also examined. Scholars have suggested that in order for sport organizations to build long standing relationships with consumers, they would have to build a positive team image (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008). This study supports this notion in that individuals who positively perceived MLB diversity outreach efforts were more likely to perceive MLB as having a positive image.

This finding supports and extends research regarding the importance of effective Corporate Social Responsibility communication initiatives on image portrayal (Tala & Prasad, 2015). Moreover, CSR communication initiatives have been explained as being a necessary component to how organizations communicate their commitment to being socially responsible (Dawkins & Ngunjiri, 2008).

**Identification.** Sport team identification has been a focal point for scholars who were seeking to understand the motives of why individuals choose to identify with a particular team (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). In fact, research has shown that persons who strongly identify with a team tended to report more involvement with the team, display more pride regarding the team’s successes, have more positive expectations concerning future team performances, exhibit greater willingness to invest larger amounts of time and money watching the team play; and be more likely to believe that other fans belonging to their identified team possess special qualities (Greenwood, Kanters, & Casper, 2006).

This study supports this notion in that individuals who perceived MLB outreach efforts to be positive were more likely to identify with the team. This research also extends and supports prior research that describes sport team identification as a feeling of belonging (Branscombe & Wann, 1991). In Cheney and Tompkin’s (1987) essay on organizational identification, they
defined organizational identification as “the individual’s connection within the organization” (p. 1). Much of the literature on organizational communication has examined how employees’ identified with the organization in which they work for (Cheney, 1983). For the purposes of this study however, organizational identification was examined from a sport team identification perspective. The reason for this is that individuals who attend games are considered stakeholders along with employees within the sport organization (Hoegle, Schmidt, & Torgler, 2014).

For example, Pritchard, Stuman, and Patton (2010) examined affinity and affiliation as a way for individuals to identify with a sport organization. The results of this study indicated that affiliation and affinity both served as significant predictors of fan identification towards the football team. Also, when the university shared their values and mission with the students, the students felt a closer bond with the university, which subsequently led them to have a closer identity with the football team. Although further investigation is needed, it is possible that MLB outreach efforts has helped individuals develop an affinity and affiliation towards their team.

**Social responsiveness.** Corporate Social Responsibility research within professional sports has been growing rapidly (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009, Breitbarth & Harris). For example, scholars have explained that social responsible sports initiatives (e.g., NFL Play 60, NHL Green, NASCAR Drive4Diversity) have received accolades for their support in their respective communities. This study shows support for the Corporate Social Responsibility literature in that individuals who positively perceived MLB outreach efforts were more likely to view MLB as socially responsive. This work also extends and supports research that explained that public serving institutions have a responsibility to address key socioeconomic issues at the community level (Dempsey, 2010).

Babiak and Wolfe (2006) noted that, as recently as the late 1990’s, socially responsible
involvement did not play a significant role in sport organization governance and operations. However, these organizations have recognized the necessity for being socially responsible to the communities, especially if they are looking to maximize the growth of their organization. Whether in the forms of community improvements, volunteerism, philanthropy, environmental initiatives, or educational and health programs, most sport organizations now identify the need to support some form of social involvement (Walker & Kent, 2009).

**Theoretical Implications**

Stakeholder Theory suggests that external stakeholders (i.e., customers, suppliers, government agencies, non-profit organizations, communities) are as important to the growth and development of a business as internal stakeholders (e.g., stockholders, owners, management, employees) (Freeman, 1984). Further, the theory addresses three specific problems: the problem of value creation creation and trade, the problem of ethics in capitalism, and the problem of the managerial mindset (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010). Stakeholder Theory has been criticized for being predominantly a descriptive theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). However, this study has offered empirical evidence that supports the theory’s premise in that organizations must put in place mechanisms to communicate and develop relationships with external relationships.

**Value creation and trade.** Freeman et al. (2010) cautioned that businesses that wish to grow in the 21st century and beyond should recognize the socioeconomic shifts in society and amend their business agendas according to these shifting trends. In turn, these businesses would see a reciprocated loyalty to their organization from their target audiences. Major League Baseball has recognized the need for diversity and inclusion within the game and they have worked to address this by creating programs (i.e., Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities, Urban
Youth Academy) geared towards the inclusion of minorities.

However, these programs have not been as successful in recognizing and addressing the socioeconomic issues as had hoped. This implies that MLB has only been minimally successful in the areas of value creation and trade. Program managers mentioned that they have had longstanding issues with communicating and developing relationships with their stakeholders. These include not being able to reach individuals through emails and not being able to relate to them. If this continues, then it is imperative that MLB continue to find ways to address the problem of value and trade. Fans want to be valued. More so, they want to know that the value creation from the team is genuine. If MLB continues to show value towards African-American community, then the community could develop into being long-term fans.

*Ethics and capitalism.* Once organizations address the problem of value creation and trade, they must address the problem of ethics and capitalism (Freeman et. al, 2010). The problem of ethics and capitalism is concerned with organizations being ethically responsible while simultaneously remaining fiscally profitable. Major League Baseball, while working to be a social responsible entity, is still a highly successful global business that is determined to be as profitable as possible.

By creating diversity outreach programs to promote social inclusion, MLB has attempted to address the problem of ethics and capitalism by implementing programs to increase the number of African-Americans who play and/or become fans of the game. Although these programs are in place, there still remains a gap in the number of African-Americans who are involved in the game of baseball. This implies a clear lack of success of these programs in their goal to increase the number of African-American players in MLB, albeit, MLB is trying to be both ethical and profitable. Stakeholder theory suggests that if organizations wish to be both
profitable and ethical, then they must continue to explore methods that would allow them to do so (Freeman et. al, 2010). As a result, MLB must continue to explore the concept of ethics and capitalism in order to get more African-Americans involved within the game.

**Managerial mindset.** Once organizations commit to being both responsible and profitable, managers within organizations must work to make ethical decisions (Freeman et al., 2010). Further, Donaldson and Preston (1995) emphasized that "stakeholder theory is managerial in the broad sense of that term" in that it portrays managers as individuals who pay "simultaneous attention to the legitimate interests of all appropriate stakeholders, both in the establishment of organizational structures and general policies and in case-by case decision making" (p. 67).

Although MLB has worked to develop programs that address their diversity issues, they still face major challenges. Accordingly, this implies that MLB must reevaluate their decision-making processes to improve the efficiency of the programs they offer. Noted earlier, the front office of MLB and the program managers are independent of each other when it comes to how diversity outreach programs are implemented. According to the managerial mindset process, this is not an efficient way of ensuring that decisions have a positive impact on organizational growth. One of the main questions that is posed when it comes to the managerial mindset is how can managers adopt a mindset that puts business and ethics together to make decisions on a routine basis.

**Lack of relationship development among stakeholders.** For MLB, the lack of participants in study two suggests that no relationship has been established between MLB and their external stakeholders (e.g., fans, parents of RBI/UYA participants). In regards to Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), organizations that develop positive relationships with their
stakeholders is one of the more important factors into the success of that organization. This lack of relationship is also evident in study one of this dissertation.

For the RBI program managers who operate out of a Boys and Girls club expressed that their resources to reach out to the African-American community (e.g., means of transportation for the youth, lack of funds, and lack of communication with parents) were more limiting than those program managers affiliated with an actual team. This also explains a lack of relationship development among MLB teams. Consequently, the organizational-public relationship is crucial to the survival and growth of the organization. However, MLB may or may not concern themselves with these efforts because despite the lack of African-Americans involved in the game, Major League Baseball remains one of the highest revenue generating sport organizations (Hanssen, 1998). Still, MLB made a commitment to help increase the number of African-Americans who are involved in the game of baseball.

Unfortunately, the efforts MLB have established to develop relationships with the African-American community remains flawed. To have programs in place for almost 30 years that specifically were created to increase the involvement in baseball among African-Americans, yet there has been a steady decrease in their involvement shows that MLB either does not care about developing these relationships or that MLB is not concerned about making changes within these communities.

**Social Identity Theory.** In addition to what the results suggest for Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), one could surmise that the lack of participants for study two could suggest that individuals may lack an identification towards Major League Baseball. A theory that could be used to address this issue would be Social Identity Theory (SIT)(Tajfel & Turner, 1979;1986).
Tajfel and Turner (1979;1986) explained that this theory attempts to understand intergroup behavior on the basis of individuals’ group memberships that significantly impact an individuals’ identity and subsequent behaviors. Further, they explained that this works to explain patterns of prejudice and discrimination and social changes resulting from intergroup competition for resources including status, power, and prestige. Another aspect to this theory is that social identities, which includes the broad social groups to which people belong (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status) are a source of individuals’ self-esteem.

In regards to MLB, individuals’ who are not involved with either the RBI or UYA programs may perceive that MLB’s status within society is one that is out of their reach. This makes sense considering that a theoretical principle to SIT posits that when social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive either to join a situation or group that is more positively associated with their need of belonging to a particular group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

From a sport specific perspective, “sport viewers tend to exhibit ingroup-bias supportive of teams with which they identify, and more negative or derogatory attitudes or behavior toward groups with which their teams come into conflict” (Haridakis, 2012, p. 348). Given this, it is possible that individuals who do not become involved with baseball may have negative attitudes toward MLB. Consequently, these negative attitudes could have detrimental effects on how African-Americans become involved within the game of baseball. As group members are drawn to and communicate with people they see as part of their social (group) identities, it would behoove MLB to speak to issues and needs that are important that are essential to African-American social identity.


Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, MLB has worked to be a more socially inclusive organization through its outreach efforts. However, each program is operated independently from the front office of MLB. This type of operation allows for inconsistency in the mission and goals of these programs. For example, a majority of the program managers explained that they did not have measurements in place to determine the success of their programs, while a small number of program managers did have measurements in place. This implies that MLB should consider establishing a success measurement tool that can be utilized by all teams. Specifically, the measurement tool should be one that helps establish specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time sensitive (SMART) goals (Lee & Kotler, 2011).

Major League must also establish a more effective way of communicating their outreach effort mission to their 30 teams. More so, MLB should hire a liaison that has expertise in interorganizational communication so that effective communication mechanisms can be established between the front office and their 30 teams. This will allow for communication and relationship building to become more consistent. Some program managers explained that they have had issues with developing these relationships with the African-American community because individuals from these communities have a hard time trusting those who are considered outsiders.

One way in which MLB can address this is to have communication be more transparent between them and their target audiences. Freeman (1984) explained that relationship building entails some level of transparency from the organization to the external stakeholder. Developing this level of transparency is necessary for MLB to communicate and develop relationships with the African-American community. One way in which this could be accomplished is to advertise
and promote their community engagement efforts more. Program managers admitted that many of their efforts go unnoticed due to the lack of exposure. Aggressive promotion of their diversity outreach efforts to the general public could aide in the development of trust from their targeted stakeholders. In addition to this, another way that trust could be developed between an organization and its publics is to help their public establish a level of identity, which SIT posits would help develop stronger relationships.

In study two of this dissertation, it was found that individuals who are actually involved with the RBI and UYA programs have a psychological commitment to the team, positive image of MLB, they identify with the team, and perceive MLB as being socially responsive. However, MLB’s inability to have consistency with increasing the number of African-Americans involved in the game calls for more investment into the African-American community. Also, MLB should consider how to make the game more relatable to African-American youth. As reported in the results, many program managers explained that African-American youth perceive the game of baseball as not being relatable to them. This is consistent with Blank, Sweeney, and Fuller’s (2014) study which described football and basketball being a more excitable than baseball.

One way in which MLB can accomplish making the game more exciting and relatable to the African-American community is to increase the accessibility of television exposure of games. Scholars have argued that many African-Americans could be at a disadvantage of not having exposure to MLB games due to the limited access of the games on free television (Fortunato & Williams, 2010). Additionally, they also explained that a disproportionate amount of African-Americans households do not have access to cable television. Investing in and airing more games on free television channels could help in getting African-American youth both more exposure to the game and them become more interested.
Another way in which program managers explained that one way that African-American individuals could become more involved if MLB promoted more African-American players and encouraged more African-American players to volunteer more in the African-American community. Further, they explained that other professional sports (i.e., football, basketball) have done a better job with promoting and engulfing African-American athletes into the community. If African-American youth have more access to African-American players, their interest in the game of baseball could increase.

Program managers expressed the necessity of having more UYA programs that are sponsored by MLB teams. Since the RBI program is a summer program, these managers expressed that African-American youth need a program that promotes the game of baseball and provides life skills training on a year round basis. The UYA programs provide this, but only 4 of the current 30 teams have UYA programs in place. Even with these programs, UYA program managers have not been able to find ways to measure the success of these programs. The UYA programs not only supplement the RBI program in baseball instruction, they provide workshops on education and life skills initiatives. This makes having the ability to measure the success of these programs much more important. Thus, having a team of experts create a measurement tool for the UYA educational and life skills initiatives is necessary for the creation and maintenance of future programs.

What separates MLB from professional sports leagues (i.e., NFL, NBA) is that once a person is drafted into the major leagues, they go through a farm system called Minor League Baseball. Once the player spends three to four years in Minor League Baseball, they hopefully make join the Major Leagues. Throughout this process, players from multicultural backgrounds could face some of their first challenges regarding diversity in a predominantly white sport. In
fact, it has been argued that organizational communication regarding diversity play an important role in how players from multiethnic backgrounds adjust to playing professional baseball (Ressler, 2013). Therefore, MLB should develop strategies that aide in increasing the awareness of diversity throughout the organizational assimilation process.

**Problems with Major League Baseball.** For MLB, the research from this dissertation has shown that the organization has not taking the time to recognize the needs and wants of its stakeholders. For many of the program managers, they explained that they have several RBI teams that play in local and regional tournaments each year. With some program managers explaining that they have upwards of 100 teams that participate in these tournaments, it is hard to believe that people really cared about the programs when only 46 participants completed the questionnaire.

However, since MLB has had the RBI and UYA programs established for more than a decade and still there is no progress in the involvement of African-Americans in the game of baseball, one can assume that MLB is not concerned about the effectiveness of these programs. Rather, it is possible that they are more concerned with being able to prove that they simply have programs in place.

For many of the program managers who described both their role within MLB and the purposes of the RBI and UYA programs, they reported answers that were similar to the mission and vision of the RBI/UYA program information found on the MLB website. For individuals who are not involved in the RBI/UYA programs but are aware of them, they may consider these diversity outreach efforts put forth by MLB as patronizing. It has been shown that individuals who are considered those to be in high status social groups usually show pity and/or are patronizing to those who are considered to be in low status social groups (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick,
Moreover, In Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick’s study examining how individuals assign stereotypes to others, it was explained that low-income black individuals were viewed with contempt and have been stereotyped as having low competence. However, people from the middle class or individuals who are professionals were viewed as being highly competent and people that are admired. Given this, it could be possible that MLB perceives itself as being a highly competent organization that knows exactly how to help the lowly competent low-income African-Americans, despite the fact that the organization has not taken the time to thoroughly investigate the needs and wants of the African-American community. Therefore, conducting an analysis that specifically works to examine the needs and desires of these communities is necessary for future success of MLB programs.

Limitations

First, all 30 MLB RBI/UYA program managers were not interviewed for this study. Some of them either never replied to the emails soliciting their participation while others explained that they were not willing to participate in the study. If all program managers participated in the interview, then there could possibly be a different outcome when it comes to the different themes that emerged.

Second, although the Skype interviews allowed the researcher to check for verbal and nonverbal cues, face-to-face interviews could have provided a different outcome for the results of study one. It has been argued that face-to-face interviews offer researchers a richer communication experience with the interviewee (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Therefore, Skype interviews could have influenced on the richness of the interviews.

Third, there were only 46 respondents for study two’s questionnaire. Of those 46, only 20 were African-American. However, this was expected considering that program managers in
study one said that individuals from these communities are hard to reach. Further, they explained that numerous attempts to contact individuals who live within the communities are often not successful. Possibly having more African-American individuals complete the questionnaire could provide more information of how African-Americans view MLB and their programs.

Fourth, individuals who completed the questionnaire were already involved within the RBI and UYA programs. Having individuals who are not involved with the RBI and UYA programs complete the questionnaire could have provided additional viewpoints. Fifth, conducting focus groups with African-Americans who live within these communities could have provided a more in-depth analysis of their perceptions of MLB diversity outreach efforts. Focus groups have been described as being one of the best option for researchers looking to learn the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of a service, concept, idea, or product (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvick, & Alberts, 2006). Therefore, having the individuals complete the questionnaire may have limited gaining an understanding of the individuals’ perceptions of MLB outreach efforts.

**Future Directions**

When determining how MLB can become more efficient in understanding their outreach efforts, researchers should consider the Positive Deviance (PD) approach (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010). This approach is an extension of the Diffusion of Innovation (Rodgers, 1962). Where it differs is that instead of a change agent entering an organization to describe the necessity of adopting an innovation, the PD approach explains that communities or organizations already have the answer to a problem somewhere within the organization. Considering this, scholars should partner with RBI/UYA programs that have tools in place that measure success. If these programs have worked in regards to getting more African-Americans involved in the game
of baseball, then it would be feasible to replicate what is working and test the measurement with programs who have no formal way of measuring success.

In their book on organizing for social change, Papa, Singhal, and Papa (2006) stated that entities should take the time to discover why they wish to organize for social change. They go on to explain that organizations must evaluate their purpose through understanding dialogic and dialectic tensions that exist between them and their cause. Further, they noted that “the process of organizing for social change requires consideration of the nuances, contradictions, and dialectics that emerge when people attempt to change their behavior at the individual or collective level” (p. 49). Given this, it is imperative that scholarship be forwarded that examines and assesses MLB’s diversity outreach. The reason for this is that there is still a disconnect between MLB’s outreach efforts and the involvement in baseball by African-Americans.

Additionally, examining the interorganizational relationship between the front office of MLB and all 30 MLB teams is important. Since each team operates independently of both each other and the front office of MLB, one can assume that communication regarding the mission and vision of current and future programs offered to increase diversity throughout MLB will remain inconsistent if changes are not made.

Scholars should also consider conducting research examining the perceptions of MLB outreach efforts from individuals who are not currently involved with a team or their RBI/UYA programs. Considering that the mission of MLB’s diversity outreach efforts is to increase the number of players and fans from minority backgrounds, it is necessary to gain an understanding of what individuals who are not involved with baseball would report.
While gaining an understanding of how individuals from a myriad of diverse backgrounds identify and become more involved with sport organizations, scholars should explore how intertwining this identity under one common group is necessary. One such concept that could help in this matter is the Common In-Group Identity Model. This model is a concept that forwards “that bias can be reduced by factors that transform members’ perceptions of group boundaries from ‘us’ and ‘them’ to a more inclusive ‘we’” (p. 1). In their chapter, Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, and Rust (1993) explained that there are four hypotheses for positive intergroup relations: integration (i.e., different groups on the same team), separatism (i.e., different groups), assimilation (i.e., one group), and marginalization (i.e., separate individuals). With this model, they felt that it could reduce the perception of bias between in-groups and out-groups members which could create a common identity.

Cunningham (2005) conducted a study that examined how the model would moderate the association between lack of similarity and satisfaction between coworkers. The participants for his study were assistant track coaches who worked at various NCAA Division I institutions. He found that a common in-group identity was associated with the reduction of dissimilarity among coworkers from marginalized backgrounds. Further, Cunningham explained that when the common identity was implemented among the coworkers, the “us” and “them” rhetoric was exchanged with more “we” statements, which reduced some levels of in-group and out-group biases.

For MLB, developing a common in-group identity between the front office and all RBI/UYA program managers could help the teams become more uniform in how they develop their outreach efforts. Boys and Girls Club affiliate program managers expressed that they did
not have as much support (i.e., financial, emotional) as the Team affiliated programs. Considering this, MLB may have an issue of common in-group identify that should be examined.

**Conclusion**

Although Major League Baseball has worked to address the lack of diversity within the game, the number of African-American players and fans continue to decline. As long as MLB baseball continues to remain culturally irrelevant for African-American youth, there will remain a gap in the number of African-American youth who are involved in the game of baseball. Major League Baseball must continue to create avenues that provide entertainment value for African-American youth in order to reach this demographic.

MLB must work to develop strategic communication campaigns that embodies the tangible needs of African-Americans. For some program managers, they explained that MLB does more outreach for those of Dominican descent rather than those from African-American communities. Bruggink (2013) explained that the reason for this is that Dominican youth who go on to play in MLB farm systems come at a cheaper cost than African-American youth. Nonetheless, MLB must reevaluate their outreach efforts if they are to increase the number of African-American players and fans within the game.

Since MLB began to see a decline of African-American in the late 1980’s, it has continued to scramble for a solution to the problem. Some have said that having lesser positions, lower pay, and possessing minimal political power was the reason for the decline during that time (Jioubo, 1988). Nonetheless, Jioubo explained that when MLB officially integrated the game in 1947 with Jackie Robinson, it did so well before many institutions in American society. As more attention is paid to understanding how MLB should work to get more African-Americans involved in the game of baseball, gaining an understanding of what societal shifts
helped cause this phenomenon is just as important. In exploring this issue, we must continue to answer the problems that Stakeholder Theory suggest: the problem of value creation and trade, ethics and capitalism, and the managerial mindset (Freeman et al., 2010).
References


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Appendix A

MLB Dissertation Proposal

To the Office of Major League Baseball,

My name is Shaun M. Anderson and I am a Ph.D. Candidate and W.E.B. DuBois Fellow in the Department of Communication Studies at West Virginia University. Currently, I am working on my dissertation under the direction of Dr. Matthew M. Martin, which focuses on diversity and inclusion outreach of Major League Baseball. Specifically, I am working to create a diversity outreach model that could be implemented by organizations in the near future.

Per your mission statement, your focus is to promote greater inclusion of minorities into the mainstream of the game. Similar to your mission statement, the focus of my dissertation is to discover new and creative ways to increase not only the number of minority players in baseball but to increase the number of diverse individuals who support Major League Baseball.

To achieve this end, I would need your help in obtaining the following information: I am wishing to receive contact information from the individuals who manage Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities programs for teams within Major League Baseball. I would like to interview these individuals to examine the current diversity initiatives. I thank you for considering my request. I believe that Major League Baseball would benefit from the information found from this study.

All the best,

Shaun M. Anderson
Ph.D. Candidate/W.E.B. DuBois Fellow
Department of Communication Studies
West Virginia University
suanderson@mix.wvu.edu

Matthew M. Martin
Chair and Professor
Department of Communication Studies
West Virginia University
Matt.Martin@mail.wvu.edu
Hi Shaun,

We are happy to assist you with this! I would like to set up a call with at the end of this week or early next week to discuss some guidelines. We are going to provide you with the Club contacts as well as contact information for a few league directors that run RBI through their local Parks and Rec Departments. They sometimes have an even better understanding of challenges the underserved youth population faces in their local communities.

Friday I am pretty clear, let me know what time works in your schedule. The same for Wednesday of next week.

Best,

Jess

Jess Dunn
Coordinator, Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities
Major League Baseball
245 Park Ave
New York, NY 10167
(O): 212 931 7449
Jessica.Dunn@mlb.com
Good afternoon Shaun,

I have attached a document that contains the contacts for the MLB club affiliated RBI leagues as well as a few leagues run through local park and recreation departments. Also included on the document are the contacts for the other Youth Programs run by MLB. The RBI program currently has over 200 programs around the country all of which are run independently of each other. Some are affiliated with the MLB clubs others are Mom & Pop leagues. The different leagues, running independently of each other, helps to bring diversity to the RBI program. Good luck with your research and your dissertation! If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to Jess or myself.

Sincerely,

Daniel Paesano
Youth Programs
Office of the Commissioner of Baseball
(212) 931-7800 ext: 1119
245 Park Ave.
New York, NY 10167
January 6th, 2016

To Whom it May Concern,

On behalf of Major League Baseball’s Youth Programs Department, we approve that Shaun Anderson, Ph.D. Candidate; Department of Communication Studies at West Virginia University, can disseminate a questionnaire to individuals within the communities in which the MLB teams serve as it relates to his research on MLB’s RBI Program. This questionnaire is being conducted for Shaun’s Ph.D. thesis and his research request and materials have been reviewed and approved by Major League Baseball.

Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions.

Sincerely,

David James
Senior Director, Youth Programs/ RBI
Major League Baseball
245 Park Ave
New York, NY 10167
(O): 212 931 7839
David.James@mlb.com
Hello League Directors,

We hope this email finds you well. I am writing to personally introduce you to Shaun Anderson, a Ph.D. Candidate at West Virginia University. Shaun’s dissertation is focused around the discovery and creative application of engaging/increasing the number of minority players in baseball (you can read more in his letter attached). Shaun has asked to interview a number of RBI league directors to better understand the ways in which local RBI Programs impact their local communities. We will be working with him from a national standpoint as well.

We have provided Shaun with your email addresses and hope that you will be able to find a few minutes to help him with his research. We have made it clear that this is a busy time of year for each of you with children going back to school as well as with playoffs getting underway (for those of you running club affiliated programs). Shaun has expressed that he is humbled by the opportunity to speak with each of you and will be nothing short of respectful with your time. He has also made clear that all feedback will remain anonymous in his dissertation unless additional permission is granted from the interviewee him/herself.

If you have any additional questions, feel free to reach out to me directly or to Shaun who is cc’ed on this email.

Warmest,

Jess

Jess Dunn
Coordinator, Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities
Major League Baseball
245 Park Ave
New York, NY 10167
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Jessica.Dunn@mlb.com
Appendix D

Interview Guide

November 30, 2015

Dear Participant:

This letter is a request for you to take part in a research project designed to assess the effectiveness of Major League Baseball Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) and Urban Youth Academy (UYA) programs. This research study is being conducted by Matthew M. Martin, Ph.D. and Shaun M. Anderson, Ph.D. Candidate, both in the Department of Communication Studies at West Virginia University. This study is being conducted as part of a dissertation and may be submitted for presentation at a professional conference.

To participate in this study, you must be an RBI or UYA program coordinator. There are no known associated risks with participating in this study. Anything that you say during the interview will be audio recorded and will only be heard by the researchers involved in this study. Researchers of this study will not use anyone’s name in written reports. During the interview process, should you no longer want to participate, you can stop the interview at any time without any consequences. This interview will take about 30 minutes to complete.

Should you have any questions about this letter or the research project, please feel free to contact the primary investigator Dr. Matthew M. Martin at (304) 293-3905 or by e-mail at Matt.Martin@mail.wvu.edu or the Co-Investigator Shaun M. Anderson at (304)282-9859 or by e-mail at suanderson@mix.wvu.edu. This study has been acknowledged by West Virginia University’s Institutional Review Board (protocol #1511925032).

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Matthew M. Martin, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Matt.Martin@mail.wvu.edu

Shaun M. Anderson, M.S.
Ph.D. Candidate
suanderson@mix.wvu.edu
Hello, my name is Shaun M. Anderson and I am a Ph.D. Candidate at West Virginia University. I would like to thank you for participating in this study. Today, we will be conducting an interview via Skype. The approximate time for this interview will be no longer than 30 minutes. In this time, I will be asking you a series of questions pertaining to your role as a Manager of the Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities program. This will be a recorded session in order for me to be able to go back and listen to your responses. No one else will have access to these recordings, not even my dissertation committee. However, research assistants will be used for the analysis of the anonymous data. For the purposes of anonymity, your name nor your organizations name will be used in this study (unless your approval has been given). Furthermore, this study is strictly voluntary and you are not required to answer any given questions. Thank you again for being willing to participate in this study. Are there any questions? Ok, let’s begin.

1. What are the specific programs that you operate under the RBI/UYA?
   - What makes you passionate about your job?
   - Could you explain your role within the organization?

2. Could you explain when your program started and why your program was launched?
   - How has your program changed over time?
   - What were some of the reasons that caused you to change your program?
   - If it has not changed: Why do you believe that your program does not need to change?

3. With your programs, how do you define success
   - How do you measure the success of your programs?
   - How often do you measure the success of these programs?
   - What are your benchmark goals?

4. What do you believe can be done in the future to increase African-American involvement?
   - What has been some of your biggest challenges in communicating and developing relationships with the African American community?
   - What would you say about the future of the RBI/UYA programs?
Appendix E

Study Two Questionnaire

January 23, 2016

Dear Participant:

This letter is a request for you to take part in a research project designed to assess the effectiveness of Major League Baseball Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) and Urban Academy (UYA) programs. This research study is being conducted by Matthew M. Martin and Shaun M. Anderson Ph.D. Candidate, both in the Department of Communication Studies West Virginia University.

To participate in this study, you must be 18 year of age or older. You will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire that should take you no more than 5 to 10 minutes to complete. There are no known associated risks with participating in this study. Anything that you respond to in the questionnaire will only be analyzed by the researcher involved in this study. Researcher: study will not ask for any names, making your participating completely anonymous. You have the option to stop it at anytime.

Should you have any questions about this letter or the research project, please feel free to contact the primary investigator Dr. Matthew M. Martin at (304) 293-3905 or by e-mail at Matt.Martin@mail.wvu.edu or the Co-Investigator Shaun M. Anderson at suanderson@mix.wvu.edu. This study has been acknowledged by West Virginia University Institutional Review Board (protocol #1601980754).

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Matthew M. Martin, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Matt.Martin@mail.wvu.edu

Shaun M. Anderson, M. S.
Ph.D. Candidate
suanderson@mix.wvu.edu
Instructions. Please complete the following statements that best describe your thoughts about Major League Baseball’s Reviving Baseball and Urban Youth Academy programs.

1. I feel that the Pirates organization supports local community events that are of interest to their African American fans.

2. I think that the Pirates organization strives to improve the communities in which I live.

3. I believe that the Pirates organization actively plays a role in the lives of the communities it serves.

4. Being a fan of the Pirates is important to me.

5. Nothing could change my loyalty to the Pirates.

6. I am committed fan to the Pirates.

7. I am aware of MLB’s Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities/Urban Youth Academy programs.

8. MLB’s Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities/Urban Youth Academy programs are successful.

9. I am unfamiliar with MLB’s Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities/Urban Youth Academy programs.

10. I have a good impression of the Pirates organization.

11. In my opinion, the Pirates organization has a good image in the minds of the African-American community.

12. I believe that the Pirates organization has a better image than other organizations in the community.

13. When someone criticizes the Pirates, it feels like a personal insult.

14. I feel that the successes of the Pirates are my successes.

15. I feel a sense of affiliation with the Pirates organization rather than just being a fan.
Instructions. Please provide your thoughts regarding the following statements.

1. Why did you become involved with this program?

2. What has this baseball team done in the past to build a relationship in your community?

3. What do you think this baseball team could do in your community to increase interest in Major League Baseball?

Please complete the following demographic questions.

1. Please report a number between 0 and 10 that best describes you as a fan of baseball, when 0 = Not a Fan and 10 = Extreme Fan

2. The Pirates organization does a good job in advertising to the African-American community

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

3. I would like to see more Pirates players make personal appearances in my community?

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

4. I regularly follow the Pirates (e.g., watch the games, read about the games) during the regular season

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

5. What is your approximate household income before taxes? (Please check one)

   __________

6. How many Pirates games did you attend this last season?

   ____ 0
   ____ 1
   ____ 2 to 5
   ____ 6 or more
7. Have you ever attended a non-baseball event hosted by the Pirates organization?
   ____ Yes  ____ No

8. If yes, briefly describe the event and tell us why you believe the event was successful or not?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

9. Ethnicity
   ____ Hispanic or Latina
   ____ Black or African American
   ____ Asian American
   ____ White or Caucasian
   ____ If not any of the above, please describe your ethnicity

10. What is your gender?
    ____ Male
    ____ Female

11. What is your age?
    ____